

PHIL TYLER'S OPPORTUNITY



No. 142

FREDERICK E. BURNHAM

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[page 11

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BY

Frederick E. Burnham

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**TO A GREAT COMPANY
OF YOUNG MEN IN WHOSE
HEARTS BURNS A DESIRE TO
LIVE A FULL LIFE — ONE OF
INTELLIGENT PURPOSEFUL-
NESS AND OF SERVICE TO
OTHERS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED**

CONTENTS

I.	Phil Buys Out a Country Store	9
II.	Dire Prognostications	19
III.	Jake Carruthers' Pool-Room	27
IV.	Phil Goes to Church	35
V.	Phil and Luke Go Fishing	43
VI.	Jake Carruthers Obeys the Law	51
VII.	Joe Sawyer In Trouble	61
VIII.	Deacon Andrews Surprises Folks	71
IX.	Phil in the Clutch of Constable Marlow	79
X.	Mr. Sturgis Starts a Fund	87
XI.	"Fire!"	95
XII.	Mr. Parker Comes On from Boston-	103
XIII.	The Auction	111
XIV.	Harking Back and Looking Forward	121

PHIL TYLER'S OPPORTUNITY

CHAPTER I

PHIL BUYS OUT A COUNTRY STORE

"THE next station is South Madison! South Madison next!"

Phil Tyler sprang to his feet and reached for the suit case in the rack over the car window. "Well, I have got here at last," he murmured. "God has certainly blessed me with a wonderful day for my journey."

The train was slowing down and just as it was about to stop in front of a small country station Phil stepped lightly to the platform. "I believe I'm the sole arrival," he chuckled as the train got under way once more. Setting down his suit case, he made his way into the station and there waited for a minute or so while the agent was telegraphing. Presently the agent looked up and then Phil spoke to him. "How far is it to the village?" he questioned.

"'Bout two miles," replied the man. "Follow the road across the track and it'll lead you right to the center. Never been this way before, eh?"

"This is the first time I have ever been up this way," replied Phil. "I am from Boston. Through an advertise-

ment in the newspaper I learned that there is a small store for sale here in South Madison, and the price named being within my limited means, I decided to come on and take a look at it."

"I guess you mean the old Cunningham store," remarked the agent.

"Yes, that's the name," said Phil. "According to the paper the proprietor died recently."

"Levi Cunningham did a nice little business there the last few years,—a nice little business," declared the agent. "He had a good share of the trade from the camps down to the lake—summer trade. The season was rather short, but while it lasted it was good. Another thing that helped Levi out was his gasoline station. He sold a pile of gasoline and oil to automobilists. He told me one day that he averaged to sell from five hundred to a thousand gallons of gasoline in a week. You won't make any mistake if you buy out the store."

Phil thanked him for the information and was soon on his way to the village. Once fairly out of sight of the station, Phil set down his suit case beneath a big pine tree which overhung the road, and dropping upon his knees on the carpet of pine needles, he thanked God for the beautiful spring day and asked for divine guidance in reaching a decision in the matter of the store which he contemplated purchasing.

"Something tells me that this is my big opportunity," said Phil, talking to himself as he pushed on toward the village. "I hope so. One thing in my favor is that I know something about running a store. The two years I put in clerking for Mr. Parker will help me out a pile now. I haven't any money to waste."

It was not long before Phil was passing scattered farm-houses. He had traveled about a mile when he was accosted by a youth of seventeen years, who was at work in a field close to the road. "Guess ye-ou're a stranger 'round these here parts," remarked the youth, grinning as he leaned upon his hoe. "I never see ye-ou afore."

"I am from Boston," replied Phil. "I have come on to take a look at the Cunningham store," he added, thinking that it might be an excellent idea to draw the young man out a bit. "I am thinking of buying it."

"Ye be? So ye're from Boston, eh? I jest wish I was thar. If thar's anythin' I hate it's farmin'. I'd like to get out o' here an' see the world. So ye're thinkin' o' buyin' Levi Cunningham's store, eh? I jest wish I had the money to swing it. It's a little gold mine. I don't see what ails folks in this here town thet somebody didn't snap it up the fust crack out o' the box. Ye-ou want to see Lawyer Tudbury; he has the handlin' on't. He lives two doors beyond the church. Levi's widow does all her dealin's through him."

"May I ask your name?" questioned Phil.

"I'll swap names with ye," answered the youth cheerily. "My name is Luke Jackson."

"Mine is Phil Tyler," said Phil smiling. "I say, Luke, when you get down upon your knees tonight just thank God that you live in the country. The country has the city beaten all kinds of ways."

"Down on my knees!" ejaculated Luke. "Ye-ou make me laff. The only time I get down on my knees is when I'm weedin'."

"Well, Luke, take my advice—when you are alone in your room get down on your knees and reverently ask the Lord Jesus Christ to guide your steps and make you more contented with your lot. You will be surprised how much happier you will feel for doing it."

"Guess ye-ou're sorter religious," remarked Luke.

"Yes, I am," replied Phil. "I believe in Jesus Christ and in every word of the Bible, and I want to tell you, Luke, that my belief has brought me genuine happiness."

"Wall, I persume it's all right," said Luke, "but I'll tell ye one thing—ye won't find but precious little company in this here town. Thar ain't more'n thutty or forty folks thet ever steps foot inside o' the meetin'-house, an' the most o' them is old folks. Thar used to be a reg'lar minister, but thet was years 'go. Now all they hold is jest prayer-meetin's on Sundays. A good shar' on the young folks goes

down to the lake come Sunday; thet is to say, they does so long as the weather holds warm."

"The chances are good that I will see you again before long, Luke," said Phil. "Now I guess I'll hustle along and see Mr. Tudbury. Good luck, Luke."

"Wall, here's hopin' ye make a deal with Mr. Tudbury an' thet ye make a go on't arter ye get the store," exclaimed Luke. "I like ye-ou, Phil, even if ye be pious."

Phil started on and a brisk walk of twenty minutes brought him to the village. There he saw two stores on opposite sides of the street. The one on the right was evidently open for business, while the drawn curtains in the windows of the other indicated that it was closed. The road from the station crossed a macadam road, and the two stores faced the main thoroughfare. Having taken a look at the outside of the closed store, Phil hastened on toward the church, which stood only about a dozen rods distant, and then he turned in at the gate of the second house beyond the church. His summons was quickly answered by a dapper little man who wore big horn-rimmed glasses. "I wish to see Mr. Tudbury," said Phil. "My name is Philip Tyler."

"I am Mr. Tudbury," replied the man. "Walk right in."

"I have come from Boston to take a look at the Cunningham store," declared Phil when in the lawyer's study. "I am considering the purchase of it."

"I will take you right over to see it, Mr. Tyler," declared the lawyer. "I consider it an excellent purchase at the figure named in my advertisement—one thousand dollars. An inventory of the stock of goods on hand will disclose the fact that the price is low."

Less than five minutes elapsed ere the lawyer was unlocking the door to the store. "The store is just as it was the day that Mr. Cunningham died," apologized the lawyer. "To be perfectly candid, neatness was not one of Mr. Cunningham's strong points, so I shall be obliged to ask you to pardon appearances."

"What I am most interested in is the stock on hand, Mr. Tudbury," replied Phil, "and, well, the amount of business done by Mr. Cunningham the past year or so. Once satisfied as to those two points, I shall be ready to talk business."

Phil went over the stock carefully, not taking an exact inventory, to be sure, but it was thorough enough to satisfy him that the merchandise on hand was well worth one thousand dollars. He looked over the late Mr. Cunningham's books; then turning to the lawyer he said, "Mr. Tudbury, I am satisfied. I have decided to purchase. I have with me a certified check for one thousand dollars, and if you will make out the necessary papers, I will settle with you and get busy here this afternoon. I would like to open up for business by day after tomorrow."

"I like to do business with a man who knows what he wants and when he finds it comes to a prompt decision," declared the lawyer approvingly.

"Well, I have talked the matter over with the best Friend I have in the world," said Phil, "and now the way seems clear. You call to mind what it says in Proverbs about trusting in the Lord?"

"I—I'm afraid I do not," replied the lawyer, looking up quickly.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding,'" quoted Phil. "'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'"

"I am afraid that I am more familiar with law books than I am with the Bible," remarked the lawyer, grinning. "Well, suppose we go back to my home and I will draw up a bill of sale."

"By the way, can you tell me where I will be likely to find board and lodging here in the village, Mr. Tudbury?" questioned Phil.

"If I were in your place I would see Mrs. Sawyer," replied Mr. Tudbury. "You passed her home on the way up from the station. It is the third house from the store: a red house on the left-hand side of the road. I am quite sure that you would find a very pleasant home there. She has a son about your age."

Back at the store once more, and having changed to an old suit of clothes which he had brought in his suitcase, Phil got busy with the broom at once. He had not been at work very long when who should push open the door and walk in but Luke Jackson.

"So ye bought it, eh?" exclaimed Luke, smiling broadly.

"Yes, Luke, I own this store now," replied Phil. "Day after tomorrow I shall be ready for business if all goes well."

"I thought I'd slip up an' give ye a hint in case ye did buy," said Luke. "I happened to think arter ye'd gone thet if ye-ou was to make a slip same as ye did afore me—let on to the fellers thet ye're religious—they'd guy the life out on ye. Ye want to keep thet dark. The gang thet hangs 'round this here store is great for spinnin' yarns thet's purty spicy. Once they gets warmed up thar's sompin' doin' in the line on a story right straight 'long, an' I want to tell ye-ou thet they spend a pile o' money here."

"Thank you for coming up, Luke, but there will be nothing doing in this store in the way of questionable stories so long as I am proprietor," declared Phil. "I am going to try to treat everybody fairly and my wishes are going to be respected along that line. As for keeping it dark about my being a Christian, I am proud of that fact and I want everybody to know it. The Apostle Paul said, 'For

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' If the Apostle Paul was not ashamed, I am sure that I ought not to be."

"Wall, o' course ye can do as ye see fit, but I'm tellin' ye-ou thet if ye say anythin' to the boys thet hang out in here, tellin' 'em to cut out swearin' an' smutty stories, they'll drop ye like a hot potato. Your name 'ill be Dennis right off the reel. They won't stan' for it."

"You are going to stand by me, Luke?" questioned Phil suddenly, placing his hand upon Luke's shoulder.

"Thet's what I will!" exploded Luke. "I'm afeared ye're goin' be up agin it in good shape, but I'll stan' by ye. Somehow I can't help likin' the way ye stan' up in your boots for what ye be'lieve."

CHAPTER II

DIRE PROGNOSTICATIONS

Luke did not stay very long and after he had gone Phil went out into the back shop and pleaded for strength and wisdom to do and say what was right. He felt better when he returned to work and he hustled things along in great shape until nearly dark. Finally, calling to mind the fact that as yet he had made no arrangements for his night's lodging, he changed his clothes and, locking up the store, made his way down the road to see Mrs. Sawyer in regard to board and room. Reaching the red house Mr. Tudbury had referred to, he turned in from the road and a moment later rang the door-bell. It was answered by a motherly woman of perhaps fifty years.

"My name is Philip Tyler," said Phil as he lifted his hat. "I purchased the Cunningham store this afternoon, and Mr. Tudbury told me that possibly I could secure board and room here."

"I think that I can accommodate you, Mr. Tyler," replied Mrs. Sawyer, for it was none other than she who had come to the door. "Come right in, Mr. Tyler."

Mutually satisfactory arrangements were made as to settlement for room and board. Phil then returned to the

store to secure his suitcase. When he got back to the house again he found his room ready for occupancy. It was a very pleasant west room on the second floor; from the windows he could see the mountains in the distance. The sun had already set and now the shadows of night were settling down over the country-side. Phil had just time to wash up when he was called to supper. Having been assigned his seat at the table, he bowed his head and silently said grace. When he looked up he was surprised to note tears in Mrs. Sawyer's eyes.

"I shall be very glad, Mr. Tyler, to have you ask the blessing at the table in the future," declared Mrs. Sawyer as she was about to wait upon Phil. "When my husband was alive he always said a few words of grace. I—I don't know just how my son will take it, but you must not take offence if he makes light of your devoutness. Joe, my son, is a well-meaning young man, but, I am sorry to say, rather inclined to associate with those whose influence is not uplifting. I—"

Just then the kitchen door was pushed open and a young man of eighteen "breezed in." As he entered the dining-room he stopped short and stood staring at Phil. Mrs. Sawyer introduced her son to Phil, explaining about the purchase of the store.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Tyler," exclaimed Joe Sawyer, warmly gripping Phil's hand. "I see where we have some

rattling good times together. After supper I will take you up to the pool-room and introduce you to the gang. I suppose you play pool?"

"Not guilty," replied Phil. "To be candid I don't believe in such amusement, and in the second place I don't have any time to waste that way. Still, we can have some wonderful times together."

"You must be one of those religious chaps," chuckled Joe.

"You have hit the nail right on the head," laughed Phil. "That's what makes me so happy."

"Well, I suppose it's all right, but you'll miss a lot of fun in this world."

"You will need a powerful microscope to find the real fun that I miss because of the religion of Jesus Christ," replied Phil, looking keenly into Joe's eyes. "To my way of thinking the Christian is the only one in this world who is genuinely happy. The trouble with most fellows is that they condemn the religion of Jesus Christ without knowing a thing about it. How would you like to be up before a judge and have him take one look at you and say, 'I don't know anything about your case, but you're guilty—life imprisonment, for you.'"

"I don't believe I would fancy being up before such a judge," laughed Joe.

"Well, that's the way with thousands who condemn the

religion of Jesus Christ. They know nothing about it and won't try to learn anything about it. The Apostle Paul said, 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' One of the easiest things to prove in this world is that the religion of Jesus Christ stands for real happiness."

For half an hour more Phil chatted there at the table with the mother and son, but finally they arose and Phil went back to the store.

"I like you first-class, Mr. Tyler," remarked Joe, who walked up to the square with him, "but I want to give you a little advice—don't make any break before the boys about religion. Business and religion don't mix worth a cent."

"I didn't know that," said Phil, with animation. "In Boston I worked for two years for a man by the name of Parker who was a thorough Christian. And I want to tell you, Joe, that he prospered in business. In the third chapter of Proverbs is a verse which hits my case exactly—'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' I don't want any better promise than that, Joe."

"You're going to run into an awful snag, Phil," remarked Joe. "You are beaten here at the very start I am afraid."

"I am not worrying about that," said Phil, smiling.

At the store Joe parted with Phil, who resumed work where he had left off. He busied himself setting the shelves

to rights, and when he called a halt the store looked vastly more inviting than it did at the beginning. Returning to his room, he took the Bible from his suit case, and, as was his custom, read from it for half an hour or more. The twenty-fifth verse of the twenty-ninth chapter of Proverbs especially appealed to him—"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Shortly before noon the following day Phil got the surprise of his life. Who should "blow in" to the store but Dick Kimball, a grocery drummer from Boston, one who had formerly called regularly upon Phil's old employer, Mr. Parker. "Are my eyes on crooked?" ejaculated Kimball when he beheld Phil.

"Is it you, Dick?" cried Phil.

"That's what, Phil. What are you doing way up here?"

"I bought out this store yesterday. I was hoping to see a grocery drummer today. Get out the old order-book, Dick, and I will see what I can do for you. First, though, how's my credit? I'm not down in Bradstreet's or Dun's yet."

"Don't you worry about your credit, Phil. We don't fret about chaps of your stamp. 'Shoot' your order at me and go as high as you like—one hundred or five hundred dollars' worth of goods. They will be landed here next Monday morning without fail."

Dick was busy taking down the items which Phil named, and when the last article in the order had been booked, he turned to Phil and said, "Phil, I have a hunch that you are going to do well here. I sold Mr. Cunningham quite a bill of goods every time I stopped off. There are only two grocery stores in the town, this one and Jim Carpenter's across the way; and Mr. Cunningham did twice the business that Jim did."

"I am hearing all kinds of dire prognostications, Dick," commented Phil. "Two or three with whom I have talked have an idea that religion and business won't mix."

"Won't, eh?" snorted Dick. "Well, I can tell them right off the bat that my firm will open an account with a man of your stamp, or that of your old employer, Mr. Parker, when they will shut up like a clam to the guy who mixes business and rum, or pool, or gambling. I say you're going to make a go of it here. Of course it may be a bit hard at the start, but it won't be long before you'll get them coming."

Dick strapped up his sample-case, and telling Phil to expect him again in about a month, he hastened to the station. Phil had locked up the store and walked with him as far as Mrs. Sawyer's home. There they shook hands and a moment or two later Phil was in his room.

That afternoon Phil had a visitor, an old man who hobbled into the store and seated himself comfortably be-

hind the big salamander stove. "I heared thet ye'd bought out this here store, neighbor, so thought I'd drop in an' have a little talk with ye 'bout them ye'll be dealin' with when ye open up for business," remarked the old man. "My name is Hosea Pettingell an' I've lived here in South Madison all my life. That ain't nobody in this here town thet I don't know. Now if ye-ou'll take a pencil an' jot down the names o' them thet's poor pay, I'll try to give ye a line on the hull on 'em."

"Now look here, Mr. Pettingell," said Phil, "no doubt you mean all right, in a way, but the fact is I don't care to hear a word about the folks here in town. I am going to run a cash business, and such being the case, they will all be good pay so far as I am concerned. You are an older man than I am, but I am going to take the liberty to quote you a passage from Philippians. If I recall aright, it is the eighth verse of the fourth chapter. 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'"

"Then ye don't want to hear nothin' 'bout folks?" questioned the old man testily.

"I shall be glad to hear anything good about them, Mr. Pettingell," replied Phil agreeably.

"Huh! I guess I ain't got nothin' to say 'long thet line," grumbled Mr. Pettingell. "Ye-ou're jest like a colt that ain't been broke to harness—headstrong. Ye-ou'll pay for it an' pay dear; mark my word on't!" Getting onto his feet, the old man stubbed across the floor and going out, banged the door behind him.

A gasoline truck stopped in front of the store. Phil was glad enough to see the representative of the oil company show up.

"You had better have me put in five hundred gallons, young man," said the driver. "Tomorrow is Saturday, and Sunday you will do a lively business."

"You had better make it two hundred gallons to start with," said Phil. "I shall not be open for business on Sundays."

"Huh?"

"Sunday my store will be closed," declared Phil.

"That won't go here, young man," remonstrated the driver, shaking his head. "Sunday is the best day of the week."

"That is what I think," laughed Phil. "It is so good that I want to enjoy it. The Good Book tells us to 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.'"

"It's none of my business, of course, but I see your finish," remarked the driver.

The afternoon drew to a close and when Phil went to supper all was in readiness for the morrow, even to a rough sign which he had painted advising the public that the store would be open for business on Saturday morning.

CHAPTER III

JAKE CARRUTHERS' POOL-ROOM

At half past six the following morning the store was open for business. Phil had unlocked the door just before his first customer arrived. A little flurry of trade followed, half a dozen or more customers showing up during the ensuing half hour or so. A lull followed, during which Phil had a chance to do a few odd jobs about the store. Along about eight o'clock Luke Jackson entered.

"Mother wanted a few things for the house, so here I be," said Luke as he stepped up to the counter. "Done any business yet?"

"Yes, I have made a nice little start," replied Phil.

"I'd like to make a start for sompin' wuth while," grumbled Luke. "I get to thinkin' o' all the big chances fellers has down to the city, an' it sets me purty nigh crazy."

"Luke, I am from Boston, and I want to tell you that I know considerable about a country boy's chances down there," said Phil. "The average country boy finds himself up against a mighty stiff proposition. Where there is one who makes good, there are scores who can't make both ends

meet to save their lives. You have a real chance here, Luke. I take it that you have a good farm."

"Wall, it's purty good, but it 'ould be a good deal better if I was to take holt an' work harder on't."

"Luke, you just forget all about the city and settle right into the harness here in South Madison. Make a success of the farm. I don't believe that your mother wants you to go to the city."

"Ye-ou jest bet she don't! She cries ev'ry time I speak 'bout goin'. I guess maybe ye're right 'bout the city. It must be purty hard sleddin' for the feller thet's out on a job down thar. I guess I'll shet up for a spell an' see what I can make out on the farm. H'm. I guess it's 'bout time I was gettin' ye to fill this here order mother made out."

Phil put up the various commodities which the order called for, and when the last article was wrapped, Luke settled for the goods, and carried them out to his buggy.

A candy man drove up to the store and Phil purchased quite freely from him. His coming seemed to be the signal for children to flock to the store, and after the salesman had gone Phil did a lively business over the candy-case. Shortly before noon a rather ragged boy of perhaps a dozen years entered the store and stood for a moment looking into the candy-case wistfully. "I'd like a few o' them pep'mints, but I ain't got no money," he said

at length. "I don't want 'em for myself, but for granny," he added. "She's terrible fond on 'em."

"What's your name, my boy?" questioned Phil.

"Skinny Tucker. I live with granny down 'long side o' the poor farm. Some folks says as how we ought to live *on* the poor farm, but they ain't got us thar yet. They won't, neither, if I can help it. I ain't very big, but I'm willin' to work, an' do work, too, when thar's anythin' I can do. I was jest wonderin' if thar wasn't somethin' I could do for you so's I could earn a little bag on 'em."

"You are just the boy I want to see," exclaimed Phil. "If you will do a little errand for me I'll give you some peppermints. Do you know where Mrs. Sawyer lives?"

"Sure. Jest tell me what you want done an' I'll run like a fox."

"I want you to take this basket and go down there after my dinner. I told her that I would send down for it about noon."

Skinny was off like the wind and it was not long before he returned with a steaming hot dinner. Phil gave him a generous bag of the peppermints and a moment later the boy was gone, "hot footing" it over the road which led to his home. "That's the boy for me," murmured Phil as he got ready to eat his dinner out in the rear room; "he thinks more of his grandmother's sweet-tooth

than he does of his own. I want to get better acquainted with that lad."

Business was fairly brisk with Phil the greater part of the afternoon. He was handicapped because of lack of goods, but knowing that the store would be stocked much better Monday, he did not worry very much over that fact. About six o'clock Joe Sawyer took his supper to him, and there being no trade just then, he had an opportunity to eat without being interrupted.

Shortly after seven o'clock half 'a dozen young fellows sauntered into the store and took a look about. Stepping over to the candy-case, they purchased liberally. All went well for a time, but gradually boisterous talk became interspersed with oaths. Phil promptly remonstrated with them. "See here, fellows," he said, "this is not a barroom. So long as you talk and act like gentlemen you are welcome to remain here, but I cannot allow any irreverence or gross talk in my store. The fact is, fellows, that I am a Christian, and I cannot conscientiously stand for any such profanity as I just heard."

"A Christian!" jeered one of the young men. "Haw-haw! I guess you have backed into the wrong stall. This is one of those free and easy towns where folks do about as they like. Take a trip down to the lake some Sunday and you will think that this is a wide open town."

"If there are things going on here in defiance of the law, I shall do my part to see to it that the law is en-

forced," declared Phil, a bright spot burning in each cheek. "A real Christian does not stand idly by when the laws of the land are being ignored."

"If you try meddling with affairs in this town, which do not concern you, you will find yourself in serious trouble," growled another. "You will find South Madison so mighty warm that you will be glad to get out in short order."

"I think that we will not argue the question further," said Phil as a customer came into the store. "Just remember what I said in regard to your language while here."

"Come on, boys," cried one of the young men, "that guy don't know which side his bread is buttered on. We'll give this store a wide berth in the future."

"Guess ye've been havin' it out with them young bloods," chuckled the newcomer, a man well along in years.

"I did not like their talk and so told them how I felt about it," said Phil. "I have no use for profanity or vile stories."

"That's whar ye're right, young man," exclaimed the old man. "I jest want to shake hands with ye. Sompin tells me thet ye-ou're a Christian."

"Yes, sir," replied Phil. "I am proud to admit that fact."

"Wall, I want to tell ye thet I've tried to follow in the Marster's footsteps for purty nigh sixty year. I was

jest 'bout twenty-two year old when I j'ined the church, an' I want to tell ye thet thar ain't never been the day thet I've regretted takin' the step. My name is Hezekiah Andrews, an' I'm deacon o' the church. We don't have no reg'lar minister, 'cause we can't seem to get money 'nough to pay one his stipend, but we hold a meetin' each Sunday mornin' in the church. We 'ould like to have ye come over to church tomorrow, an' if the Spirit so moves ye, say what's in your heart."

"I shall be very glad to go, Mr. Andrews," said Phil. "What time are the services held?"

"Ten-thutty. I'll be lookin' for ye at the door. I'll introduce ye to the folks. By the way, I'd like to know your name."

"Philip Tyler."

"Thet's a good old Yankee name. How's things been comin' with ye here today?"

"I have had a fair trade for the first day. I am rather low on stock and shall be until the first of next week, but all things considered, I can't complain of the way I have been treated."

"Who be ye stoppin' with? Or be ye keepin' house?"

"I am boarding and rooming at Mrs. Sawyer's."

"Ye couldn't have picked a better place. She is a fine woman. She's got a boy thet's a well-meanin' fellow, but 'cordin' to all 'counts, he's gettin' purty wild. He's book-

keeper down to the cha'r factory. Got a nice job, but I don't b'lieve he's savin' a cent. He spends a good shar' on't in the pool-room 'round the corner. Thet's a bad place to my way o' thinkin'. It's been run for years by a man o' the name o' Jake Carruthers, an' I want to tell ye thet Jake is fur from bein' much on a man. Ye can't see what's goin' on in thar, 'cause the winders is all painted over with black paint to the top o' the fust sash. I cac'late thar's consider'ble gamblin' carried on in thar."

"He has no right to have the view of the interior obstructed," exclaimed Phil. "It is a state law that all pool-rooms shall be open to full and unobstructed view from the street."

"Be ye sure on't?"

"Yes, sir. I know of a case which was tried out in court. The owner of the pool-room was beaten in court, and not only beaten, but his license to run a pool-room was taken away from him."

"I'd jest love to see Jake made to toe the mark," remarked the old man.

"Although I am not a taxpayer here as yet, Mr. Andrews, I am going to see what can be done about those windows," declared Phil. "I consider it my duty as a Christian and as a citizen of this state, to see to it that I do my part toward bringing about due respect for the law. A pool-room which is open to view is bad enough, but one closed to view from the street is vastly worse.

What is the reason that the constable here does not see that the laws are enforced?"

"Huh! Tom Marlowe al'ays has his hand out for hush-money. It ain't no use to appeal to him."

"If that is the case, then the only thing to do is to put him out of office and place in it a man who will do his duty fearlessly. Perhaps you may think that I am rather forward in airing my views, Mr. Andrews, but somehow I can't help speaking my mind."

"Thet's jest what I like. Thar's too many thet jest set down an' let things take their course. I b'lieve thet the day ain't fur off thet this town is goin' to wake up an' take a stan' for genuwine law an' order. I am proud to welcome ye as a townsman, an' I jest hope thet ye'll start things a-b'ilin' here."

Other customers entered, so Mr. Andrews made his purchases and went out. For two hours or more Phil waited on trade. About half past ten, he emptied the till, and putting the bills and change in his pockets, he turned out the lights and locked the store. Before starting for home he walked down past the pool-room. "That paint will be off those windows within a week, or my name is not Phil Tyler," he muttered as he headed for his room.

CHAPTER IV

PHIL GOES TO CHURCH

The sun was just peeping above the horizon the following morning when Phil went downstairs and out into the yard. "This is the sort of day that makes a fellow feel great," he exclaimed, talking to himself. "I am going to get somebody to go to church with me. If I can't get Joe to go, I'm going to hike down to Luke's place and do my level best to bring him back with me."

For half an hour or more Phil walked about the yard, reading the while from a little pocket testament. Joe left the house and joined him.

"Oh, boy, but you stirred up a hornets' nest last night!" he exclaimed. "The boys were wild when they got back to the pool-room. I am afraid that it will be a long time before any of them will show up in your store again."

"I don't want them to unless they can behave themselves—act and talk like gentlemen," replied Phil. "No gentleman uses profanity, or tells coarse stories, stories which he would be ashamed to relate before his mother or sisters."

"Whew! You're knocking me," laughed Joe.

"I am only telling you facts, Joe," replied Phil, plac-

ing his hand upon Joe's shoulder. "By the way, Joe, what do you say to going to church with me this morning? I want company."

"Nothing doing, Phil," answered Joe, derisively. "I like you first-class, even if you are a Christian, but when it comes to my going to church I draw the line. The fellows would guy the life out of me."

"Well, I am not going to argue the question with you just at present, but I believe that the day is coming when you will go with me."

"What makes you think so?"

"I have the definite promise of it right here, Joe," said Phil, opening his Testament to the twenty-first chapter of Matthew and pointing to the twenty-second verse. "'And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,'" read Phil. "That's pretty plain, eh? I prayed for you this morning, Joe. The time may not be ripe for the answering of my prayer, but I firmly believe that it will be answered in due time."

Joe smiled, but made no reply.

After breakfast Phil dressed for church as best he could. He had sent on to Boston for his trunk, but it had not come as yet, so he was obliged to get along with what little linen he had brought in his suit case. At nine o'clock he was on his way down to see Luke.

Luke was just on the point of starting off fishing when

Phil arrived. "Hello!" he cried. "How come ye down this way?"

"I want you to go to church with me, Luke," replied Phil. "How long will it take you to get ready?"

"Why, I—I was goin' fishin'," exploded Luke. "Thar's dandy trout-fishin' jest t'other side o' the railroad."

"Put off the fishing until next Wednesday afternoon, and I'll go with you," said Phil. "I intend to close my store for a half-holiday the middle of each week. That's the boy, Luke; put up the old rod and hustle into your best clothes. I'll wait for you down by the road."

"I—I'm wonderin' what the fellers will say to me if they see me goin' to church," remarked Luke, looking rather undecided.

"What will your mother say?" queried Phil, looking keenly into Luke's eyes.

"Say! She won't know what to say," replied Luke, smiling broadly. "She'd be thet tickled she 'ouldn't know what to do with herself!"

"Whom do you care more for, Luke,—the fellows, or your mother?"

"My mother, o' course. Huh! I see the p'int. I'll be with ye inside o' ha'f an hour."

Shortly before ten o'clock Luke emerged from the house. There was a broad grin on his face as he neared the spot where Phil was seated upon the wall. "My mother

was thet happy that she jest cried," he said. "Next Sunday she's comin' with me. She says thet at last the Lord has answered her prayer to send somebody to this town thet loves the Lord an' ain't afeared to let folks know it."

Half way back to the village a youth of about Luke's age sang out to the latter, "Where are you headed for, Luke?"

"Church," replied Luke laconically.

"Church! Haw-haw! Gettin' religion?"

"If it wasn't Sunday I'd show ye blamed quick whether I was gettin' religion or not!" snorted Luke. "Ye-ou say thet to me 'bout tomorrow mornin', an' I'll land ye one. Put thet in your pipe an' smoke it!"

Phil and Luke reached the church and were warmly greeted at the door by Deacon Andrews. "So ye brought Luke 'long with ye, Mr. Tyler," exclaimed the deacon. "I'm glad to welcome the both on ye."

"I am glad to be here, Deacon Andrews," declared Phil. "I always try to make it a point not to go to church alone."

Homeward-bound about an hour and a half later, Phil asked Luke how he enjoyed the service.

"Purty blamed dry I call it," replied Luke promptly. "Thar wasn't no music an' thar wasn't no preachin'. Ye-ou was 'bout the only one thet had anythin' to say thet was real bright an' cheerin'. 'Bout the hull on 'em looked as

though they'd eaten sompin' for breakfast thet hurt 'em."

"We'll have some music next Sunday, Luke," declared Phil. "I told Deacon Andrews that I would settle for the repairing of the reed-organ. He is going to get his granddaughter to send for a man to repair the bellows and tune the instrument. He says that she will play for us next Sunday."

"Goin' to pay for it out o' your own pocket?" ejaculated Luke.

"Sure. Why not?"

"I guess thar ain't no make-b'lieve 'bout your religion," remarked Luke. "When a feller digs down in his jeans he gener'ly means business. H'm! I 'ouldn't take much stock in a feller whose pockets was lined with fish-hooks."

"I take it you like music, Luke," said Phil.

"Ye-ou bet I do. While I was settin' thar in church I was sayin' to myself thet it was the first an' last time y'd ketch me thar, but ye-ou plannin' on havin' the organ fixed sorter makes me change my mind. I'll show up next Sunday with mother without fail."

"Well, Luke, if I do not see you before, I will be on hand Wednesday afternoon by two o'clock for that fishing trip," said Phil as he was about to part with Luke.

"Ye ain't forgot 'bout thet, then?" inquired Luke, in happy mood.

"Not a bit of it."

"I guess I ain't made no mistake in havin' ye-ou for a friend," remarked Luke. "I like a feller that keeps his word."

After dinner Phil asked Joe if he would like to take a walk in the woods, and the latter readily agreed to the proposition. "Yes, I would like to go first-class," he said. "There is one thing I like about you—you are one of those ten-minutes-to-two chaps."

"I don't believe I quite get you," laughed Phil.

"Why, the ten-minutes-to-two fellow is always smiling. I had an idea that religion gave a fellow a twenty-minutes-to-four face."

"Nothing of the sort, Joe," replied Phil. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ brings joy to the heart, not gloom."

They started off, and it was not long before they were deep in the woods. They rambled on and on, stopping now and then to admire some bit of woodland scenery. Finally they came to an opening in the woods and there they saw spread before them a patch of ground which was literally blue with big horseshoe violets. "That is one of the prettiest sights I ever saw, Phil," remarked Joe. "I just wish that mother were here to see it."

"We'll have to carry some violets home to your mother," said Phil. "They are so fragrant that they will scent the whole house."

They picked and picked, and when they started for

home each carried an enormous bunch of the flowers. It was nearly dark when at last they walked into the yard. Quite needless to state, Mrs. Sawyer was delighted with the violets.

Having partaken of a light lunch, Phil retired to his room and for an hour or more he read from his Bible. About nine o'clock, he kneeled beside his bed and thanked God for the beautiful spring day and for all the joy which it had brought him. "Dear Lord," he pleaded in conclusion, "help me to so live that I may bring no reproach to Thy name. Help me to do what Thou wouldst have me do, seeking not the applause of men, but only Thy glory. Let me not dread the wrath of men, nor hesitate to do Thy bidding, fearing the loss of worldly gain. Make me Thine humble servant. Amen."

CHAPTER V

PHIL AND LUKE GO FISHING

Before leaving for the store the following morning Phil penned a brief note to the State Commissioner of Licenses, requesting a copy of the state law relative to pool-room windows, stating that he understood that such windows were to afford an unobstructed view of the interior from the street. Six-thirty found the letter posted and the store opened for business.

Phil had just swept the floor, when suddenly it flashed upon him that he had neglected to have his scales and measures inspected. Though undoubtedly the late Mr. Cunningham had complied with the law along that line, Phil knew that it was necessary for him likewise to employ the sealer. "I won't let any grass grow under my feet," he muttered. "I'll hunt up the inspector the very first thing." Stepping across the street, he asked his neighbor, the postmaster, where he could find the local sealer.

"He will be in after his mail inside of half an hour, Mr. Tyler, and I will send him over," declared the postmaster.

When Phil told the sealer what he wanted, the man said that he would return later and attend to the matter. In

half an hour the scales and measures were duly sealed, and the law was complied with in every respect.

About nine o'clock that morning a big man threw wide the door to the store and strode up to the counter. "What's this I hear about pool-room windows?" he growled.

"I don't know just what you have heard," replied Phil coolly. "Perhaps you can enlighten me."

"Didn't you tell Mr. Andrews that the state demands an unobstructed view of the interior of a pool-room?" snarled the man.

"Yes, I said something to that effect," replied Phil.

"Well, now I want to tell *you* something, young fellow—shut up, or get out! I am the constable here, and what *I* say goes!" A vile epithet followed, which brought Phil out from behind the counter on the jump.

"I will tell *you* something now!" he cried, his eyes flashing. "I don't care whether you are the constable or the president of the United States; you can't come into my store and insult me. If you can't speak like a gentleman, get out!"

"I guess I'll take a look at your scales and measures before I go out," muttered the constable.

"Certainly," replied Phil. "I shall be glad to show them to you."

A surprised and disappointed look came into the officer's eyes when he noted the fact that the sealer had at-

tended to them. Sullenly he started for the door, and when he reached it he paused with his hand upon the latch. "My advice to you, young fellow, is this—watch your step. Start something, and you will find out who is boss in this town!"

The constable was not out of sight when Deacon Andrews entered the store. "I dunno but what I went an' put my foot in it," he admitted. "I happened to see Constable Marlowe this mornin' an' I told him what ye said 'bout the pool-room winders. I asked him why he didn't do sompin' 'bout it. He was purty techy."

"He just left here, Deacon Andrews," replied Phil. "He was decidedly angry. He spoke so insultingly to me that I told him that if he could not speak like a gentleman, to get out of my store."

"Ye did? Wall, I guess ye're 'bout the fust man to speak up to Tom. He's been constable so long that he's sorter got the idee that he runs the town, an' I guess he does, in a way. H'm. I just dropped in to tell ye that I see my gran'darter an' she says that she'll be glad to play the organ some Sunday. She's comin' down to the church today an' do her best to sort out twenty-five or thutty hymn-books thet'll pass muster. She thought thet maybe she could piece up thet many from the leaves o' them thet's all to pieces. Emmie 'ouldn't never get hung for her beauty, but I want to tell ye-ou, Mr. Tyler, thet

she's one o' the sweetest gals in the world. Thar ain't a child in the hull town but what thinks a drefful lot o' Emmie. She can't go 'long the street but what they're taggin' arter her. Yesterday is the fust day she's missed goin' to church in a long time. Had a tearin' toothache. Got cold in her face I guess."

"I wonder if she and I can scare up a little class and have a Sunday-school next Sunday?" queried Phil.

"Now I'll tell ye what we'll do. I don't see nothin' to hinder gettin' together a little class o' boys and gals, an' Emmie is jest the one to teach 'em the truths from the Scripter. So fur, so good. What I'm comin' at is this—what's to hinder us young fellers (I'm only eighty-two year old) formin' 'nother class? I'd like to see ye-ou, Mr. Tyler, the head on't, an' I guess them's 'bout the sentiments o' the rest on us young folks."

"I shall be glad to do anything in my power to further the cause of Christ, Deacon Andrews," replied Phil. "You can talk it over with those who attend church and if they wish to have me teach a senior class, I will do my best along that line. If you see your granddaughter today please ask her to come into the store; I would like to talk over the proposed junior class with her."

Deacon Andrews had just gone when an expressman arrived with the goods Phil had ordered of Dick Kimball,

the grocery drummer. The unpacking of them took a good share of the morning. It was Monday and trade was rather quiet, so Phil had plenty of opportunity to place the new goods on the shelves or carry them into the store-room. At one o'clock he closed the store for one hour and went to dinner. He carried a market-basket filled with commodities which Mrs. Sawyer had ordered.

About the middle of the afternoon Deacon Andrews' granddaughter, Miss Emma Brooks, entered the store and introduced herself. Although she was far from being a handsome young woman, she had a wonderfully good, wholesome look which pleased Phil immensely. For half an hour or more he talked with her about the church and the proposed junior class, and the end of it all was that she became as enthusiastic over the idea as he was himself.

"We simply have got to get the class under way by next Sunday, Mr. Tyler," she said as she was about to go. "We will both work with that end in view. I don't know how I shall make out as a teacher, but I am willing to try."

"With the Lord's help, Miss Brooks, I know that you will succeed," replied Phil. "Know this, Miss Brooks, that I shall pray earnestly each day that the very best of success may crown your efforts."

During the ensuing two days nothing of particular interest occurred at the store. Phil's business was fairly good,

though no better than anticipated when he bought out the store. Wednesday afternoon he kept his word with Luke, and for three hours or more they fished for brook-trout. When they returned, each carried a very gratifying string of trout.

"Thar's no use talkin', Mr. Tyler, I like ye-ou better'n better ev'ry day," said Luke as they were about to part. "Ye-ou're 'bout the happiest chap I ever see. I've a notion thet ye-ou've got sompin' thet I don't know nothin' 'bout." Suddenly his voice broke. "I—I—. Thar, I can't keep in no longer. I wish I knowed sompin' 'bout Jesus.

Phil placed his hand upon the choking boy's shoulder and walked with him into the woods a bit. Dropping upon his knees, he lifted his hands in prayer. "Dear Lord Jesus," he pleaded, "Luke wants to know Thee. Thou hast already opened his eyes to the truth that real joy and happiness come to him who follows in Thy footsteps. Dear Lord Jesus, give me wisdom to make clear the way to Luke that he may find in Thee the peace and joy which passeth all understanding. In Thy dear name I ask it. Amen."

Even until the shadows of the coming night had fallen, did Phil talk with Luke, explaining how Jesus had died to save sinners, to save him—Luke. He broke down completely, and dropping upon his knees asked forgiveness for his sins. "Jesus, I—I want to be a Christian," he

sobbed. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. "Sompin' has happened to me!" he cried. "I—I'm so happy I could jest shout for joy! I feel jest as though some tremendous weight had rolled 'way from me. Now I know what makes ye so happy, Mr. Tyler. I—I'm goin' hom' to mother an' tell her that my sins is forgiven, that I love Jesus."

"God bless you, Luke," choked Phil as he gripped Luke's hand. "Tell the good news to your mother and tell it to the world; the more you tell it, the greater will be your joy."

They parted and Phil heard Luke's voice raised in song as he marched up the little lane leading to his home:

"On'ard, Christian soldiers,
Marchin' as to war;
With the cross o' Jesus
Goin' on afore."

Phil's cup of happiness was indeed full and running over that night as he made his way home. Reaching the house, he went at once to his room and poured out his soul in prayer for Luke. When he answered the call to supper there was a wonderful look of joy in his eyes, which was good to behold.

Supper over, too happy to remain quiet, he walked back to Luke's home, carrying with him a little pocket testament, an extra one which he had purchased for just such an occasion. Tears filled his eyes as he neared the

house, for hearing a parlor organ, he looked in through the open window and saw Luke's mother seated at the instrument. Beside her stood Luke and together they were singing from a hymn-book. For all of fifteen minutes he stood there listening, but finally, when there was a lull in the singing, he advanced to the door and tapped lightly upon the panel. Luke answered his summons, and fairly yelling with delight, dragged him into the house and introduced him to his mother. "Mother, this is Mr. Tyler, the man that showed me the way to Jesus," he said.

For a few minutes Phil talked with Mrs. Jackson and then he turned to Luke and handed him the gift he had brought. "I brought this little pocket testament down to you, Luke, so that you can always have it handy to read during your spare moments," he said. "No matter if you are out hoeing and your hands are soiled, take it out and read a passage when you are resting. It will bring joy and strength to you."

"I—I don't know how to thank ye, Mr. Tyler," choked Luke. "It is jest rainin' happiness on me today."

CHAPTER VI

JAKE CARRUTHERS OBEYS THE LAW

Thursday morning Phil received a letter from the Commissioner of State Licenses, in which was enclosed a printed extract from the state laws relative to the running of pool-rooms. It was to the effect that, while pool-rooms came under the direct supervision of the police department in each city and township, certain regulations relative to the conducting of the said pool-rooms were state regulations, and blue-penciled was a clause pertaining to pool-room windows, which stated that under no condition were the said windows to be curtained or painted so as to obstruct the view of the interior from the street. It so happened that about the middle of the morning Constable Marlowe passed the store, and Phil hastening to the door, called to him.

"Mr. Marlowe, I have just received a communication from the Commissioner of Licenses to which I wish to call your attention," said Phil as the constable entered the store.

"Yes?" growled the officer.

"Here is a copy of the law relative to the obstructing of pool-room windows," declared Phil, holding forth the printed extract from the statutes.

"So you have decided to start something, eh?" snarled the constable.

"I have decided to see to it that the law is obeyed," replied Phil.

"I've got no time to waste over such nonsense," snapped the constable.

"If that is the case, then I shall feel it incumbent upon me as a citizen of this commonwealth, to place the matter in the hands of the State Constabulary," said Phil.

"You had better let the matter rest a few days until I have time to consider the situation," remarked the constable.

"I shall let the matter rest just twenty-four hours, Mr. Marlowe," shot back Phil.

"I thought I heard something about your being a Christian," sneered the constable.

"If you did, you heard aright," replied Phil. "A Christian is ever ready to back up the laws of the town, city, state, and the United States. The laws are presumed to be just laws, laws framed for the common good of the people, and, such being the case, the real Christian is anxious to see them enforced."

"Well, I will think the matter over," said the constable, turning to go. "You might, on second thought, let me take that extract covering the law relative to pool-room windows."

Phil handed him the requested printed slip of paper and a moment later the constable was gone.

"I had no intention of making enemies when I came to this town," remarked Phil, talking to himself after the officer had gone, "but be that as it may, the Lord's work must be carried on."

Shortly before Phil locked up for the dinner hour Luke entered the store. There was a broad smile on his face which told of the great happiness which had come to him. "I jest had to come up an' tell ye, Mr. Tyler, what I'm goin' to do," he said. "I'm so happy thet I've got to do sompin' to bring the good news to others."

"That is ever the way, Luke," declared Phil. "A fellow who has been genuinely converted always wants others to share his joy. Now tell me what you have in mind."

"I'm goin' to plant a ha'f acre o' potatoes extra, an' when the time comes thet I sell 'em, I'm goin' to see to it thet the money goes to buyin' Bibles for them thet ain't got none. I set up last night until arter twelve 'clock readin' thet testament ye give me. The longer I read, the more interested I got. I dunno but what I'd read until mornin' broke if the ile hadn't give out in the lamp."

"Good for you, Luke!" exclaimed Phil. "You have the right spirit—wanting others to share with you the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any time that you need any help on that half acre let me know, and I will go down any Wednes-

day afternoon and lend a hand. I will do more than that—when the time comes to market the potatoes, bring them to me and I will turn over to you the retail price for them. What I mean is this—you deliver them here as fast as I can use them, and I will pay you just what I get for them over the counter.”

“Glory! I see whar thar’s a whole grist o’ Bibles to be sent to them thet ain’t never heard ’bout Jesus!” cried Luke. “Thank ye, Mr. Tyler. If I don’t raise a bumper crop o’ potatoes it won’t be my fault.”

Phil presently locked the store and went to dinner and Luke walked along with him. “How has the farm work been going this morning, Luke?” questioned Phil as they left the store.

“Goin’! Say, Mr. Tyler, this has been the fust mornin’ I ever put in hoein’ thet I really enjoyed. I never see the time go so quick. I was whistlin’ or singin’ the hull time. The farm looked diff’rent somehow. Sompin’ seemed to say to me thet thar wasn’t no better place for me in the hull world’n right to hom’ with mother. Huh! I was singin’ one o’ them hymns mother an’ me was singin’ last night, when ’long come Tom Carkin’, the feller thet guyed me last Sunday when I was on the way to church with ye-ou. ‘Guess it struck in,’ says Tom, grinnin’ like a chessy cat. I asked him what he meant an’ he said he meant religion. Thet started me goin’, an’ I up an’ told

him what made me so happy. He jest roared; said I was a mollycoddle. 'Bout yesterday mornin' at this time I'd have landed him one, but somehow it didn't make me mad none. I told him 'bout Jesus bein' nailed to the cross an' said thet thar wasn't no mollycoddle to Him. Huh! He went 'long purty quick an' he said sompin' 'bout lettin' on to the fellers 'bout me bein' a Christian, an' I told him to go 'head, 'cause I wanted ev'rybody to know it."

"I like the way you are standing up and letting the world know that you have accepted Christ," said Phil, clapping Luke on the back.

"Wall, I look at it this way, Mr. Tyler, I wouldn't want to work for a man I was 'shamed of, an' the same way I wouldn't want to work for Jesus if I was 'shamed o' Him. I don't car' how much fun they make on me; I'm goin' to follow 'long the path ye-ou showed me yesterday arternoon."

When Phil returned to the store after dinner he found Deacon Andrews awaiting his coming. There was an amused look on the deacon's face as Phil neared the spot where he was standing. "You look happy, Deacon Andrews," exclaimed Phil as he took the key to the store from his pocket.

"I have good reason to, Mr. Tyler," chuckled the deacon.

"Yes?"

"Jake Carruthers is scrapin' the paint off the windows of his pool-room!"

"I thought it quite possible that such a thing would come to pass before many hours," laughed Phil. Then he told of the constable's visit that morning and what he had of his pool-room!"

"I guess this is 'bout the fust time Tom has made a move contrary to what he wanted to make," said the deacon. "By the way, Emmie asked me to tell ye thet she's rounded up six youngsters who have promised to j'in her class come Sunday, an' she's plannin', so she says, on makin' it a dozen by Sat'day night."

"That's great," exclaimed Phil. "I will do my best to help her out during the next two days."

Just then the store door opened and in "breezed" Mr. Oliver Mannix, Phil's landlord. "I just dropped in to tell you, Mr. Tyler, that I do not care to have you for a tenant. Here is a written notice demanding that you vacate within thirty days."

"Is not this rather sudden?" questioned Phil. "You seemed very willing to rent me the store the day that I purchased the stock and fixtures."

"That is true," growled Mr. Mannix, "but at the time I did not know anything about you. I'll tell you right now that Jake Carruthers is a close friend of mine. I guess I don't need to say anything further. You have just thirty days in which to vacate."

"Now look here, Oliver, don't ye think ye're purty rough on Mr. Tyler?" interposed Mr. Andrews. "You have got a good tenant. What do ye want to get so techy for?"

"I don't wish to hear anything more about it," snapped Mr. Mannix. "I won't have him for a tenant. I own this building, and I am going to have it vacated." Then he turned and made his way out to the street.

"Now ain't thet too bad, Mr. Tyler!" groaned Mr. Andrews. "Thar ain't 'nother store thet ye can hire."

"Well, I have thirty days in which to turn myself," replied Phil. "Come what will, I do not regret the step I took in regard to the pool-room. Even if I have to give up here for the lack of quarters, I shall feel that I have accomplished something worth while. My one hope will be that whatever good I have done will be lasting."

"Wall, I want to tell ye, Mr. Tyler, thet thar won't be no more paint on them winders, in case wust come to wust, an' ye have to give up here. Now thet we know what the law is, we'll see to it thet it is enforced."

Mr. Andrews went out and for a long time after he was gone Phil busied himself about the store. Finally he retired to the rear room, and dropping upon his knees, prayed for courage and guidance. "Dear Lord," he prayed, "I thank Thee for all that has been accomplished during the short time that I have been here. I know that it was Thy will that I should come here. It may be Thy will

that I should go elsewhere, and if such it is, I plead that Thou wilt direct my steps and give me courage and strength to do Thy bidding. I ask it in Thy dear name. Amen."

About five o'clock Phil stepped over to the post-office for a moment to see if there was any mail for him. On his way back three young fellows from the pool-room accosted him. "Guess about now you think you barked up the wrong tree," laughed one of them as they were about to pass Phil. "I told you Saturday night that you would find this town mighty warm if you tried meddling with things that did not concern you. You are one of those smart guys who have an idea that they can butt into things that do not concern them."

Phil made no reply. He just kept on his way and a moment later he was in his store. A rather elderly man followed him in. "I hear that you have been ordered to vacate," he remarked as he stepped up to the counter.

"Yes, sir," replied Phil. "Mr. Mannix notified me this afternoon."

"I heard about it through Mr. Andrews. My name is Johnson. I live down the road a few doors beyond the church. While I am not of a religious turn of mind, strictly speaking, I am strong for fair play. This town cannot afford to lose you. I want you to be successful in business here. I own a small lot just this side of the church. You say the word and I will put up a store for

you and have it ready for occupancy in less than thirty days."

"That will be just splendid, Mr. Johnson," exclaimed Phil, happily. "You have put courage right into me."

"I am glad that I am in a position to do it," declared Mr. Johnson. "What this town has needed for a long time has been somebody who would take hold fearlessly and fight for law and order. You have started in on the pool-room and I hope you will keep up the good work. It is a shame how loosely things are carried on down at the lake. We are all more or less guilty for allowing such scandalous actions. What we need is a constable who will perform his duties courageously. Tom Marlowe has been constable for a dozen years or more. Now he is in for another year."

"We will have to see to it that he fulfills his duties," said Phil. "He could be forced to resign, or be ejected from office, in case he fails to live up to his oath of office."

"Well, I will drop in and see you in the morning and we will draw up plans for your new store."

As Phil was leaving for home that night Joe Sawyer chanced along. He glared at Phil and, without speaking, quickened his step.

"What's your hurry, Joe?" queried Phil.

"Don't speak to me!" snapped Joe. "I don't want to talk with you."

CHAPTER VII

JOE SAWYER IN TROUBLE

Phil was at a loss to understand what had come over Joe so suddenly. That very morning at the breakfast table Joe had been as affable as one could well desire. Finding that he could not talk with him just then without attracting much attention, Phil followed along alone. When he reached the house he found Joe eating his supper, looking like a thunder-cloud.

"My son is in a hurry tonight, so I am having him eat his supper first, Mr. Tyler," explained Mrs. Sawyer as Phil entered the house.

"I am in no hurry, Mrs. Sawyer," replied Phil smilingly. Then he went to his room. When he came down in response to the call to supper, Joe was gone.

Supper over, Phil decided to go for a walk. There was a full moon that night, and Phil thought that he would take a tramp out to the lake he had heard so much about. Already he had learned about where it was located. When almost half way there it suddenly occurred to him what was the probable cause of Joe's anger—the removal of the paint from the pool-room windows. If such were the truth, then it was reasonable to infer that Joe was making

a practice of gambling there nights. Phil sighed heavily as he considered the abyss which yawned before the young man. He wanted to win his confidence so as to be in a position to talk with him and turn him from the downward road, yet at the very beginning he had won his enmity.

Phil came in sight of the lake in about half an hour. When he reached the edge of it he was surprised to find that it was rather a small sheet of water. He could see very clearly in the moonlight, and he estimated the area between twenty-five and thirty acres. He could see that the shores were dotted with numerous camps. A light in one some distance farther along the shore indicated that it was occupied. There was a road which skirted the lake close to the camps, and this road Phil followed. Presently he was abreast the camp where he had seen the light. The curtains were not drawn, and he had a clear view of the interior. A poker game was in progress; half a dozen young fellows were seated about a table; and facing Phil, the light shining full on his face, was Joe Sawyer!

Phil groaned inwardly as he pushed on. He realized how futile it would be for him to interfere just then. He needed no one to tell him that he would be defeating his own ends were he to attempt to plead with Joe to come home. When he had nearly reached the main road once

more, he dropped upon his knees and prayed for Joe.

Phil reached his room about half past nine and ten o'clock found him in bed, though in no mood for sleep. He heard the clock down-stairs strike the hours of eleven, twelve and one. Shortly after the last hour was struck he heard Joe come in and tiptoe up the stairs to his room.

Though Phil was a bit late in rising that morning, he ate his breakfast alone; Joe failed to go down before he left for the store. Phil could not help noting how care-worn Mrs. Sawyer looked.

Business was exceptionally brisk that morning. Up to ten o'clock Phil was so busy that he had little time to tidy up the store. Then came a lull, however, and about that time Mr. Johnson entered to talk over plans for the proposed new store. He stopped for an hour or so, and when he went away he carried with him rough plans for the contractor to work out.

A little before noon Deacon Andrews appeared smiling gleefully. "Guess thar's a little surprise in store for Oliver," he chuckled. "Ain't it jest splendid how Obed Johnson has stepped into the breach?"

"It certainly is, Mr. Andrews," replied Phil. "Mr. Johnson and I have been working out a plan for the new store this morning. He left here less than an hour ago. He expects the carpenters to be at work by Monday or Tuesday."

"Huh! I heared this mornin' thet thar wasn't but jest two chaps thet showed up at the pool-room last night. Gener'ly thar's fifteen or twenty hangin' 'round in thar the hull evenin'. Thet shows thet thar was sompin' goin' on in thar thet they didn't hanker arter folks knowin' 'bout. I see Jake as I was passin' by on the way here, an' I want to tell ye, Mr. Tyler, thet he looked purty glum. I have a notion thet his days o' runnin' thet j'int is fast bein' numbered."

"I hope so," replied Phil. "I like to see a man succeed in business, but not at the expense of the young manhood of the town."

Having made one or two small purchases, Deacon Andrews went home.

Phil had just returned from dinner when an automobile stopped in front of the store, and a moment later the man at the wheel, a well-dressed young man of twenty-eight or thirty years, alighted and went in. He was such a clean-cut, wholesome looking man that Phil instantly warmed toward him.

"Mr. Tyler, I believe?" he queried as he stepped up to the counter.

"Yes, sir," replied Phil.

"My name is Sturgis," said the stranger. "I am the manager of the South Madison chair factory. Although

you have been here but a few days, I have heard considerable concerning you, Mr. Tyler."

"Nothing bad, I hope, Mr. Sturgis," remarked Phil, smiling.

"On the contrary, only good reports have come to my ears. I was especially pleased when I learned what had come to pass in regard to the pool-room windows. Had I known the law in regard to the obstructing of the view of the interior, I should undoubtedly have taken steps in the same direction. That disreputable place has been more than a menace to the welfare of this town. I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Tyler, for you have landed a blow which has rocked it to its very foundation.

"I have come to see you, Mr. Tyler, in regard to another matter which is closely linked with the pool-room," continued Mr. Sturgis. "Although I am not a professed Christian, I have the profoundest respect for Christianity. In a small town like this news travels quickly. Already I have learned of the fearless stand which you have taken for that which you believe, incidentally turning this store from a loafing-place to a place of business where women and children can come without danger of gross language reaching their ears. I have been given to understand that you are boarding and rooming at the home of Mrs. Sawyer, and I have taken the liberty to come to you in regard

to her son, who, I presume you are aware, is in our employ in the capacity of bookkeeper."

"Yes, I understood such to be the case," replied Phil, a troubled look coming into his eyes.

"The fact is, Mr. Tyler, young Sawyer is a bit short in his accounts," declared Mr. Sturgis. "We have been rather suspicious of late that all was not as it should be, and in order to get at the facts, we employed an expert accountant to go through the books. Fortunately the shortage is not large—just a trifle over one hundred dollars. We like Joe very much in many ways, so much that we do not want to see him ruined. There are three courses open before us—have him arrested and locked up; discharge him and charge the shortage up to profit and loss; or let him continue in our employ, deducting a certain sum each week from his salary until such a time as the theft has been wiped out. I have counseled the last course. As yet he has learned nothing relative to the expert accountant's work on the books. I am hoping that he will come to us and make a clean breast of his wrong-doing within the next three days."

"Mr. Sturgis, I am very grateful to you for thus coming to me," declared Phil. "I am going to have a talk with Joe between now and Monday. It would just about break his mother's heart were she to learn of what you

have told me. I am hoping that your third proposition will work out satisfactorily."

A customer coming in, Mr. Sturgis bade Phil good-by and a moment or two later he stepped into his machine and drove off toward the factory.

Phil closed his store shortly after six o'clock that day and went home. Going at once to his room, he kneeled beside his bed and prayed for Joe. "Dear Lord," he pleaded in conclusion, "soften Joe's heart. Let this day mark the turning-point in his life. Give him strength to choose the right course, the course which will lead him onward and upward. I ask it in Thy dear name. Amen."

Supper over, Phil went out to the barn, whither Joe had gone to hunt up some kindling for morning. "I want to have a little talk with you, Joe," remarked Phil as he entered the barn.

"I don't know as I care anything about talking with you," growled Joe.

"It will be to your interest to listen to me," said Phil quietly.

Joe grunted some unintelligible reply.

"Come on, Joe," urged Phil. "I want you to take a little walk with me into the woods. The sun hasn't quite set as yet."

"I don't want to listen to any talk on religion," snapped Joe.

"I will not annoy you along that line tonight, Joe," replied Phil. "What I have in mind I am very sure will interest you."

"Well, come on, then, and have it over with," growled Joe, leading the way out of the barn. "Spit it out!"

"Joe, you have got into bad company up at the pool-room," declared Phil.

"I've got as good friends up there as any fellow needs," retorted Joe.

"Are they friends, Joe, who would stand by you were you in trouble?" questioned Phil. "Suppose you were short in your accounts—"

"I—I didn't come out here to be insulted!" cried Joe, and as he spoke a crimson flood spread over his face.

"Joe, if I could help you to square up I would gladly do it, but I haven't got the ready cash."

Joe suddenly turned white as a sheet. He stood staring at Phil. Three times he tried to speak, and three times did his tongue fail him. He just stood there at the edge of the woods,—trembling.

"I know all about it, Joe," said Phil, placing his hand upon Joe's shoulder. "You are short in your accounts down at the chair factory. You have taken over one hundred dollars. You did not really intend to steal from your firm. You have been planning all along to replace the money."

"I—I would have had the money to do it if you had not gone and meddled with the pool-room windows," choked Joe. "I was winning and in a fair way to get it all back."

"Joe, the man never lived who could lift himself by his own boot straps," declared Phil. "You might win for a day or two, but the tide would be sure to turn and you would get deeper and deeper into the mire."

"I—I guess I'm in for it," choked Joe.

"No, Joe, you have a good chance ahead of you, provided you do the right thing—give up playing pool and gambling. Mr. Sturgis will meet you half way. He came into the store this afternoon and had a long talk with me. My advice to you, Joe, is to go to Mr. Sturgis's home tonight and make a clean breast of it."

"If ever a fellow had a real friend, I—I've got one in you," said Joe, and as he spoke his hand sought Phil's. For a moment neither spoke, while the grip of their hands tightened. "I—I'm going down there now," he whispered hoarsely.

CHAPTER VIII

DEACON ANDREWS SURPRISES FOLKS

It was about nine o'clock that night when Joe returned. Phil met him a few rods from the house. "I thought I would come out and see how you got along, Joe," he said.

"If ever a man has been used white, I'm that man," declared Joe, a little catch in his voice. "I told Mr. Sturgis the whole story, and he has agreed to let me stay. I am to pay him personally two dollars each week until the amount has all been paid back. The only ones who know, or will know anything about the shortage are Mr. Sturgis, the heads of the concern, the expert accountant and you. I promised Mr. Sturgis that I would not put foot inside the pool-room again, or gamble elsewhere. I told him that I was going to right about face and be a man, and I meant every word of it."

"Good for you, Joe," exclaimed Phil. "I predict for you the best night's sleep you've had for a long time."

"I guess I need it," replied Joe. "It has been a good many moons since I've felt so easy in my mind."

Soon they returned to the house, Phil going directly to his room and Joe spending an hour or more talking with his mother.

Business started in with a bang the following morning. When Phil reached the store at half past six he found a customer awaiting his coming. At about seven o'clock Mr. Sturgis stopped there on his way down to the factory and ordered several dollars worth of groceries. He wanted them delivered, and this Phil promised to attend to before noon.

"Joe called to see me last evening," he said, "and matters have been adjusted. I am very positive that he will do his level best to keep straight from now on."

"I am very confident that you will have no occasion to worry about him in the future, Mr. Sturgis," declared Phil.

It was about an hour later that Skinny Tucker showed up. "I thought maybe I could earn some more o' them pep'mints," he said, grinning from ear to ear. "Granny thought them was 'bout the best ones she'd ever tasted."

"You are just in time, Skinny," exclaimed Phil. "Do you know where Mr. Sturgis lives?"

"You bet."

"Well, here is a basketful of groceries Mr. Sturgis ordered. I want you to carry them over to his house. Later I shall want you to go down to Mrs. Sawyer's after my dinner. I will give you some peppermints and a dime besides."

"Hoo-ray! I'll do anythin' for you, Mr. Tyler," yelled Skinny.

"I am going to take you at your word, Skinny," laughed Phil. "I want you to come to Sunday-school tomorrow. Miss Brooks is getting up a class of boys and girls. I want you to be on hand at the church at half past ten in the morning. Will you be there?"

"I—I ain't got any very good clothes," replied Skinny slowly. "I guess, though, thet Granny'll patch 'em up for me. Yes, I'll be there. I like Miss Brooks. Maybe there's prettier girls than Miss Brooks, but I'll bet there ain't no better ones in the whole world."

Skinny took the basket of groceries and it was not very long before he was back again. The noon hour being then not far off, Phil sent him down to Mrs. Sawyer's. It was just about twelve when he returned.

"What a whoppin' big bag o' pep'mints!" ejaculated Skinny a moment later. "An' an extra stick o' 'lasses candy for me! There ain't nothin' stingy 'bout you, Mr. Tyler. I just wish you had lots o' orders to carry out Sat'days an' after school, 'cause I've got a push-cart down home an' I'd be a reg'lar hoss."

"That is quite an idea, Skinny," laughed Phil. "I would not be surprised if there were a great deal of work for you to do along that line before many days. I shall keep you in mind."

Having received the promised dime, Skinny headed for home at a lively pace.

While Phil was eating his dinner the gasoline truck arrived and a moment or two later the driver entered the store. "How many gallons this time?" he questioned.

"Guess you had better make it four hundred," replied Phil.

"That sounds more like it," exclaimed the man. "Planning to keep open Sundays, eh?"

"Nothing doing along that line," said Phil, smiling. "I want to be sure of enough gasoline to carry me through next week. I ran out of it yesterday morning."

"You are a hard-boiled egg on the Sunday question," said the driver. "How do you find business in general?"

"I can't complain. It is gradually increasing with me."

"Glad to hear it. You have got curious notions about Sunday, but, there, we all have our weak points."

"That isn't a weak point with me," laughed Phil. "It is a strong point."

"Yes, in a way, I guess it is," replied the driver, deridingly.

The afternoon passed swiftly and about six o'clock Joe entered. "Here is your supper, Phil," he said. "I was afraid that I would not get back in time. Mother wanted a big bunch of those violets, so I went for them this afternoon. I got twice as many as we did last Sunday. She is going to carry them to the church tomorrow. I, well, I promised to go with her." Suddenly Joe choked up, and

for a moment he could not speak. "I—I've got an awful good mother," he said thoughtfully. "I am going to do my best to please her."

"You will never regret it, Joe," said Phil, tears coming to his own eyes.

"I am going over to the other store and buy a set of dominoes," remarked Joe a moment or two later. "I thought mother would enjoy playing a few games with me this evening."

"I've got a set right here, Joe," exclaimed Phil. "Found them while I was cleaning up the store last week. Take them home with you. You and I will try them out some evening next week."

As the evening passed Phil noted the fact that ladies and young girls were coming in and buying liberally, whereas the previous Saturday evening only one or two patronized him. One lady remarked the neatness of the store. "It is a pleasure to come in here now, Mr. Tyler," she said. "It is so different from what it was when Mr. Cunningham ran the store. It got so bad that no lady would risk venturing in here on a Saturday evening."

"I am going to do my best to keep the store neat and respectable in every way, madam," replied Phil.

"My husband, Mr. Sturgis, told me what a blow you had struck at the pool-room. He is simply delighted. I was never so surprised in my life as I was this afternoon.

He had been in a brown study for half an hour, when suddenly he brought his fist down upon the table with a vengeance. 'I have made up my mind to go to church tomorrow,' he said. Although we have been here in South Madison nearly five years, tomorrow will be the first time that my husband and I will have entered the church."

"I shall be very glad to see you and your husband there, Mrs. Sturgis," exclaimed Phil. "To be sure, we have no pastor, but that fact need not stand in the way of worshipping the Almighty. Later on I trust that things will so shape themselves that we can have a settled minister here."

Customers coming in just then, Mrs. Sturgis went her way.

Business continued so brisk that evening that it was nearly a quarter to eleven before Phil was able to close up. Having emptied the till, save for the pennies, he put out the lights and locking up the store, he started for home. Joe joined him.

"I thought it would not be a bad idea for me to come up and meet you," said Joe. "There are one or two tough guys here in town who might take it into their heads to hold you up on a Saturday night. It is just as well to take no chances."

"I am much obliged to you, Joe," exclaimed Phil. "I can't afford to lose any money. Who won out at dominoes?"

"Oh, the honors were about even," replied Joe. "We had a splendid time playing."

In his room Phil counted his cash that night before retiring, and he was pleased enough when he found that he had taken in more than twice as much as on the previous Saturday.

Phil was nearly ready for church the following morning when he heard the church-bell. It surprised him, for the previous Sunday it had not been rung. When he went down-stairs a few minutes later Mrs. Sawyer told him that it had been more than five years since she had heard it last. "Oh, it is so good to hear it!" she exclaimed.

The three started for church together, and just as they reached the road they were joined by Luke and his mother. At the church they were greeted by Deacon Andrews. "How did the bell sound?" he questioned, smiling joyfully.

"Sound!" cried Luke. "Huh! We heard it clean down to our place. I jest threw my hat in the air an' yelled 'Glory!'"

"I brought down a new rope yesterday arternoon an' put it on," explained the deacon. "I said to myself thet if we couldn't have a minister, we'd have a bell thet could be heard from one end o' the town to t'other. I pulled in on the rope for all I was wuth this mornin'."

Homeward-bound, Luke unbosomed himself regarding the services.

"I guess thar ain't many thet had a better meetin' than us folks," he said. "The music was jest splendid. Miss Brooks played the organ jest as though she loved to, an' thet was the way folks sung. The music jest rolled right out on 'em. I ain't got much on a voice for singin', but I j'ined right in. Huh! I could hear thet Mr. Sturgis 'bove the hull on 'em. He took them high notes jest like a bird. Huh! The Lord answered Deacon Andrews' prayer for money for new singin'-books. Mr. Sturgis put a ten spot in the box! I see him when he done it. Then thar was lots o' dollar bills. I had all I could do to keep from jumpin' up an' shoutin' 'Glory!' When it come to the Sunday-school class, Mr. Tyler, ye-ou did jest splendid. Ye made things jest as plain as could be, an' I guess the rest on 'em thought so, too. Miss Brooks seemed to be gettin' 'long fine with her class. They was jest as quiet as could be, an' interested, too. Anybody with ha'f an eye could see thet."

"Yes, we have had a good start, Luke," declared Phil. "Now it is up to all of us to keep up the interest, and with the Lord's help I believe we are going to do it."

CHAPTER IX

PHIL IN THE CLUTCH OF CONSTABLE MARLOW

Early Monday morning carpenters began work on the first load of lumber for the new store. Phil wanted a cellar, but because he had less than thirty days in which to vacate, Mr. Johnson thought it wise to put up the building first, and later on attend to the cellar.

That afternoon Deacon Andrews went into the store, smothering his mirth. "Jest see Oliver an' Jake talkin'." he said. "They looked as though they was liable to blow up any minute. Hello! I see ye've got a sign up 'bout deliverin' goods."

"Yes, I have decided to deliver within a half mile or so of the store, Deacon Andrews," replied Phil. "The Tucker boy is going to attend to it after school and on Saturdays. He tells me that he has a push-cart. He wants to earn a little money."

"Ye'll find him a faithful boy, Mr. Tyler. The poor boy lost his father an' mother 'bout two years ago an' since then he has been livin' with his grandmother. She has a little pension an' somehow they have managed to get 'long so fur, though I've an idee that they've found it purty tough sleddin' at times. I come in to tell ye that

Emmie is goin' to send off a money-order for the new singin'-books afore the day is over. It was jest wonderful how folks give money toward 'em yesterday mornin'. It figgered up over forty dollars."

"That is just splendid!" exclaimed Phil. "I'll warrant that your granddaughter was delighted. She did good work in patching up the old books, but they were pretty well gone."

"She was thet tickled thet she jest cried."

"By the way, Deacon Andrews, I have heard a deal about the lake. What sort of a place is it? I took a walk down there last week one evening, but of course 'could not get a very good idea of it."

"It's one o' the prettiest places I ever see, Mr. Tyler," declared the deacon. "But I'm tellin' ye thet it's one o' the wust places anywhar 'round. Thar's up'ards on a hundred camps 'long the shore. A good shar' on 'em is owned by city folks. They come thar 'bout the fust o' June an' do jest 'bout as they like—drinkin', gamblin', an' carousin'. Thar's lots o' folks right here in this town—well meanin' folks—thet 'ould like nothin' better'n to own a camp thar whar they could go an' take the women folks an' children, but as things be they fight shy on't. Lute Campbell owns the land j'inin' the lake. Thet is to say, he's got some money tied up in it, though the bank down to the county-seat holds a blanket mortgage on the property. I've heard say as how the bank is crowdin' Lute purty hard."

"Mr. Campbell leases the camp-sites, eh?"

"Yes. The bank won't let him sell none o' the land. Lute gets fifteen dollars a year for land-rent from each camper. If Lute was any sort on a figgerer he'd be ownin' the property clear by this time, but he lets money slip through his fingers like it was water. Guess thar ain't no doubt but what Tom Marlowe, the constable, gets a nice little rake-off to keep his eyes closed to what is goin' on down thar."

"What do you suppose that land is worth?" questioned Phil.

"Hard tellin'. It is taxed low. If I recall aright, it's assessed for one thousand dollars, bein' unimproved land. I've been told thet thar is a mortgage o' two thousand dollars on't, an' 'nother thousand on ha'f a dozen or more camps thet Lute put up himself an' lets each season."

"I just wish I had the money to swing that piece of property," remarked Phil.

"I wish ye had, too. I'll warrant ye'd make a clean sweep through thar, routin' out them thet ain't got no respect for God or man."

"I know a man down at Boston who would be just the one to own that piece of property," declared Phil. "I used to work for him,—a Mr. Parker. He has plenty of money with which to swing it, too. I would like to go down to the lake Wednesday afternoon and look the property over. Would you mind going down with me?"

"I'd like to go fust-rate, Mr. Tyler. I'll meet ye here at two o'clock. Thet will give ye time to go home an' get your dinner.

"Suppose we keep this thing under our hats for the present, Mr. Andrews," remarked Phil. "Of course nothing may come of it, but still there is a chance of bringing about a change. The less we say about it, the easier it will be to make a move."

"Ye have got the right idee thar, an' no mistake. We won't say a word to nobody. Jest keep sawin' wood."

Phil's sign relative to the delivery of orders within a radius of half a mile of the store was the means of setting Skinny Tucker to work that very afternoon, much to the elation of that youngster. He delivered four orders, all rather large ones, and when Phil paid him a quarter, Skinny's joy knew no bounds.

Having closed the store for the day, Phil walked over to where the new store was being built. Although it had been a rather short day for the carpenters, much work had been done. While standing there an automobile, following a most erratic course, neared the spot, and side-swiping a telephone pole, came to an abrupt stop close at hand. At the wheel was Jake Carruthers, and on the seat beside him was a boy of ten years who was crying. "You're jus' the feller I wan' see," mumbled Carruthers thickly. "You ruined my business an' now I'm goin' ruin yours."

I'm goin' t' back Oliver's boy. Soon's you get out, he's goin' t' start store where the boys can do 'bout anythin' they want to do."

"See here, Mr. Carruthers, you are in no condition to drive a car!" exclaimed Phil as the drunken man fumbled about for the ignition button. "You had better leave your machine right here until you get straightened out."

"I guess I can run this car good 'nough," snarled the man. "This is my boy. You ain' 'fraid, Jim?"

"Yes, I—I am!" sobbed the boy.

Just then who should near the spot but Constable Marlowe.

"Officer, arrest this man," commanded Phil. "He is drunk and in no condition to drive a car."

"Drive on, Jake," ordered the constable. "Don't pay any attention to this fellow."

Phil's right hand shot into the car, and beneath the dash-light his fingers gripped a bunch of wires, among which was the ignition wire. "Arrest this man, or I'll put this car out of commission!" he thundered.

"You just try it!" shot back the constable. "Try it, and I'll put you under arrest for malicious mischief!"

Phil's hand came back with a snap and with it he brought the ends of several wires.

Constable Marlowe jumped for Phil and hooked his fingers over Phil's collar. "I'll land you where you belong!" he roared.

At that instant a traffic officer on a motorcycle brought his machine to a stop within three feet of where Phil and the constable were standing. "What's the trouble here?" he questioned.

"Tha' guy said I was drunk," muttered Carruthers. "Tried to have me 'rested."

"Shut up!" roared Marlowe.

"Went an' pulled wires out so I couldn't start," persisted Carruthers. "Tom 'rested him for 'licious mishiff."

"Arrest that drunk and lock him up!" commanded the traffic officer. Then he turned to Phil and said, "I wish to commend you, young man, for your prompt action in thus putting this car out of commission. Later we will air this affair in court."

"An' it won't be the only thing we'll air, neither!"

Phil turned and beheld Deacon Andrews, who, among others, had been attracted to the scene.

"We'll air a few other things, Mr. Tyler," added the deacon. "I guess we'll make it toler'ble warm for Tom afore we get through. Goin' to arrest ye, eh?" he snapped, his anger rising.

"Come along, Jake!" growled Marlowe, yanking open the door to the car. A moment later he was on the way to the town lock-up with him.

Meanwhile Carruther's boy had jumped from the car and was legging it for home at top speed.

Having made note of Phil's name and address, also the names of several of the bystanders, including Deacon Andrews', the traffic officer went his way.

"Neighbors, the time is 'bout ripe to hold a town meetin' an' put Tom out o' office," remarked Deacon Andrews, turning to the fast gathering crowd. "I call it a purty high-handed thing that he threatened—the arrest o' Mr. Tyler."

"That's where you're right, Deacon Andrews!" cried a middle-aged man. "Conditions are rotten in this town. We've got to make a change."

"Well, folks, I guess I'll go home to supper," said Phil, smiling. With a wave of the hand he was off at a rapid stride.

"Yes, Hezekiah, it is high time that Tom was ousted from office," remarked the middle-aged man, Mr. Jonathan Wheeler, the chairman of the Board of Selectmen. "I am going to call a meeting of the selectmen tonight and get out a warrant for a special town meeting."

News travels fast in a small town, and the faster it travels, the more likely it is to be garbled. The news of Phil's arrest was no exception to the rule. Just as it was beginning to grow dark Luke got wind of it. He was milking the cows when Tom Carking bolted into the barn. "Hawhaw! Mr. Tyler is arrested!" he chuckled. "Tom Marlowe lugged him off to the jug an' locked him up!"

"Hub?"

"Fact, Luke. Jim Barker told Dan Earl, an' Dan told me. I ain't lyin'."

Luke jumped from the milking-stool, in his haste upsetting his pail of milk. He nearly bowled Tom over, and an instant later he was making a record run for the house.

"Guess he's gone crazy!" ejaculated Tom.

In two minutes Luke was "eating up" the road to the village. Inside of eight minutes he bounded into the Sawyer yard, and, without stopping to knock, threw wide the kitchen door. His eyes fairly popped from his head when he beheld Phil and Joe playing dominoes.

"I—I—I thought—ye-ou was 'rested!" he gasped. Then he began to cry.

"Not so bad as that, Luke," replied Phil, springing to his feet. "What are you crying for, Luke?"

"I heared ye was 'rested, an'—an' I come jest as quick as I could to tell ye thet my mother'd go bond for ye."

"God bless you, Luke!" cried Phil, tears coming to his own eyes. "I certainly have a good friend in you, and another in your mother." Then he told Luke what had occurred up at the village.

"Wall, I guess I'll go hom' an' finish the milkin'," remarked Luke at length. "Then, too, mother's worryin' 'bout ye, Mr. Tyler, an' I want to set her mind easy."

CHAPTER X

MR. STURGIS STARTS A FUND

Nothing worthy of special note occurred at the store the following day or Wednesday morning. More lumber arrived for the new store and the building progressed rapidly. The pool-room had not been open since the previous Saturday night, and it was rumored about town that Jake Carruthers had decided to close up for good.

Phil met Deacon Andrews at the store at two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, and they immediately started off toward the lake. Although he was eighty-two years of age, the deacon proved to be an excellent pedestrian. In not much over half an hour they came within sight of the lake and then Phil uttered an exclamation of delight. "That is one of the finest sights I ever saw," he cried. "It is one of God's beauty spots."

"An' the best thing 'bout it is that the nigher ye get to it, the purtier it looks, Mr. Tyler," declared the deacon. "It is nestled right in twixt the hills, an' surrounded by 'bout as handsome a piece o' woodland as ye're likely to see. Down to t'other end thar's a little brook, the outlet to the lake, thet ripples 'way over the rocks until it j'ins the river six or seven mile farther on."

A sharp turn in the road hid the lake and then for a quarter of a mile they travelled through thick woods, the branches of the trees completely arching the road. There were oaks, maples, silver and white birches, and occasional pines and hemlocks. Finally they came in sight of the lake once more and also the first of the camps.

"You are right, Deacon Andrews," exclaimed Phil. "The nearer one gets to the lake the more wonderful the sight. It is worth travelling miles just to see it. Have you any idea how much land Mr. Campbell owns?"

Not fur from three hundred acres."

"There is an abundance of room for twice as many camps, all having frontage on the water," remarked Phil.

"Yes, thar's plenty o' room. If thar was to be a hundred more built, thar 'ould still be consider'ble frontage I should say, an' they 'ouldn't be crowded neither."

Finally they came to a secluded spot out of sight of any of the camps, and there Phil called a halt. "Deacon Andrews," he said, "I wish that you would offer a prayer right here, asking the Almighty God to help us to turn this place from a scene of iniquity to one of righteousness."

Beneath a big pine tree Deacon Andrews and Phil dropped upon their knees. Reverently removing his hat, even as did Phil, the old man clasped his hands and lifted them in prayer. And what a prayer that was! It was

the outpouring of a soul, the soul of one who was fast passing life's last earthly milestones; of one who longed to see truth and right triumph, even as he longed to see sin crushed. The prayer was finished and a moment or two later they resumed their way.

Rounding the lake, they skirted the farther shore, later returning to the main road. "Something tells me, Deacon Andrews, that this is no idle dream," said Phil as they were about to start for home. "With God's help, I believe there is to come to pass a great change for the better here. I am going to write to Mr. Parker tonight telling him about this wonderful spot. I only wish that I had a photograph of the lake to send him."

"I can fix ye up 'long thet line," said the deacon. "I have got one at hom' thet 'ill give him a good idea on't. I'll bring it down the fust thing in the mornin'. My son took it a year 'go when he was on here from New York."

"That will be fine," exclaimed Phil. "A good photograph will show more than I could describe in forty pages."

That evening Phil penned a rather lengthy letter to his former employer. In it he explained the conditions there at the lake. One clause of the letter read as follows:

"It is quite possible that the property can be secured for five thousand dollars, and perhaps less, especially were the bank which holds the mortgage to foreclose and sell it at public auction. The income from leased camp sites

is in excess of fifteen hundred dollars per year at the present time, and added to this is the rental from five or six camps which the present owner has built. While a large proportion of the present lessees would be found to be undesirable occupants, without doubt their camps could be purchased at a reasonable figure, or the removal of them demanded and enforced. There is little doubt but what the purchased camps could be readily sold, or let to desirable occupants, and the vacated camp sites leased to respectable people. As a golden opportunity to rout iniquity and further the cause of Christ, and also as a lucrative investment, I am hoping this may appeal to you, Mr. Parker."

The following morning Phil posted the letter and photograph. At the post office he read a warrant calling a special town meeting for the election of a constable to fill the vacancy brought about by the resignation of Thomas Marlowe. While he was reading it, Mr. Wheeler, the chairman of the Board of Selectmen, touched Phil on the shoulder.

"Mr. Marlowe handed in his resignation as constable last evening, Mr. Tyler," he said. "It was the only graceful thing that he could do. That, of course, puts an end to further investigation by the state police relative to his unseemly conduct last Monday. We are hoping to elect Mr. Amos Crane, who was defeated for the same office

at the last election. He is a man who can be depended on to do his duty fearlessly. We believe that at last the town is aroused to the real facts, and that there is a majority which will stand like a rock for law and order."

"That is good news," exclaimed Phil, smiling.

"If we elect Mr. Crane constable, he will make a decided change down to the lake, too," declared Mr. Wheeler. "He will be right there Saturdays and Sundays to see to it that carousing and gambling are put an end to. That is Amos Crane. He has got the courage of a lion and the tenacity of a bulldog."

"Who is acting-constable pending the election?" questioned Phil.

"Mr. Crane. We got in touch with him last night and appointed him constable temporarily. Here he comes now, Mr. Tyler."

Coming across the street was a powerfully-built man of about forty years. One glance at his face told Phil that the new constable was a real man.

"I wish to introduce you, Mr. Crane, to Mr. Tyler," exclaimed Mr. Wheeler a moment or two later when the officer entered the post office.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Tyler," cried Mr. Crane, warmly grasping Phil's hand.

"I am very glad to meet you, too, Mr. Crane," replied Phil.

"Mr. Tyler is the man who brought things to a focus here, Amos," remarked Mr. Wheeler.

"There is no doubt about that, Jonathan." Then he turned to Phil and said, "Mr. Tyler, I want to congratulate you on the tremendous blow you struck at the pool-room. It was a great victory."

"I thank you, Mr. Crane," replied Phil, flushing with pleasure. "I made the move because I am a foe to anything which tends to drag young men and young women down to ruin. As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe in standing up in my boots and fighting for that which is right, and with His help, I am going to continue fighting to the end."

"Mr Tyler, I am not a professed Christian," declared Mr. Crane, "but I want to grip your hand once more and tell you that I have the most profound respect for you in thus declaring your faith."

Again they shook hands and a moment later Phil hastened back to his store.

Phil looked over his stock and finding himself getting rather low on several lines, he made up an order and sent on for more goods, enough to tide him over until Dick Kimball showed up on his regular trip. With the order he sent a money order in settlement of his first bill of goods; there were no banking facilities in South Madison. Not only was he glad to make payment because of a small

discount allowed on bills settled within ten days, but he did not like the idea of keeping so much cash on hand.

Late that afternoon Mr. Sturgis entered the store and greeted Phil warmly. "Mr. Tyler," he said, "there is no getting away from it, we have got to have a settled clergyman here in South Madison. We must dig down in our pockets and support one. I have been thinking about it ever since last Sunday. Last evening I talked the matter over with my wife and she heartily agrees with me. Here is one hundred dollars to start the ball rolling."

"That is splendid, Mr. Sturgis!" exclaimed Phil. "Just now I can't duplicate that amount, but I will gladly contribute fifty dollars. I wish, however, that you would see Deacon Andrews, or somebody else who is genuinely interested in the church, and make such an one custodian of the funds. I have been here only a fortnight and do not wish to appear over-zealous or over-active in matters pertaining to the town and church."

"Oh, I suppose there may be those who would misconstrue your motives," replied Mr. Sturgis, smiling. "All things considered, perhaps it will be well for me to see Deacon Andrews. I will make it a point to call at his home this evening.

Phil opened the till and having counted out five ten-dollar bills, he handed them to Mr. Sturgis. "You can

depend on me for further contributions a little later," he said.

When Luke came in to make a few purchases, and while filling his order, Phil told him about the fund which had been started.

"Hoo-ray!" yelled Luke. "I can't give much, but I'll give a dollar for a starter, an' here she be. Have had it in this here vest-pocket for the last month or more. I earned it leadin' Bill Jenkins's hoss while he was plowin'. Ye-ou give it to Deacon Andrews an' tell him thet I'll have 'nother one for him afore many days."

Phil had just finished his supper that evening when the station agent arrived with a telegram. "It came about an hour ago, Mr. Tyler," he explained, "but I had to wait until the last train had come and gone."

Phil tore open the envelope and the next instant a grin began to declare itself. The dispatch read as follows:

"Am interested. Expect me next Wednesday afternoon."

"William L. Parker."

CHAPTER XI

"FIRE!"

The directors of the savings bank which held the mortgage on the Campbell property down at the lake, had long since wearied of repeated promises in lieu of overdue interest. Demands for interest due had been followed by threats of foreclosure, and finally those threats were succeeded by action on the part of the bank. Unknown to either Deacon Andrews or Phil, foreclosure proceedings had already been instituted when they went up to take a look at the property.

The morning following the receipt of the dispatch from Mr. Parker, Phil got the surprise of his life. He had almost reached his store when he took note of a glaring poster which had been tacked upon an old board fence.

TO BE SOLD AT PUBLIC AUCTION
AT TWO O'CLOCK, JUNE THE FIFTEENTH
325 ACRES OF LAND,
More or less,
Surrounding Silver Lake
In the Township of South Madison.
Said Property to Be Sold as One Parcel
JOHN B. BAXTER, AUCTIONEER

"Two weeks from next Wednesday!" exclaimed Phil, talking to himself as he pushed on toward the store. "Won't it be glorious if Mr. Parker succeeds in bidding in that property!"

At about eight o'clock Deacon Andrews entered the store, tugging away at his beard in a futile endeavor to conceal the grin on his face. "Ain't it jest wonderful the way things is workin' out, Mr. Tyler?" he cried as he stepped up to the counter.

"It certainly is, Deacon Andrews," replied Phil.

"I could scarcely b'lieve my eyes when I fust see thet notice o' the comin' auction," chuckled the deacon.

"Here is a telegram I received last night from my former employer, Mr. Parker," said Phil, taking the despatch from his pocket and spreading it on the counter.

Having put on his spectacles, the deacon read it.

"Thet sure reads good, Mr. Tyler," he declared, "I b'lieve the good Lord is goin' to have thet property fall into Mr. Parker's hands. An' ain't it glorious 'bout the fund thet Mr. Sturgis started? I went out last evenin' after he went hom' an' I succeeded in gettin' money, an' pledges o' money, to the 'mount o' purty nigh three hundred more. Here is the list o' them thet's paid or 'greed to pay. I'm hopin' by tomorrow night to fetch it up to an even thousand dollars. If we can get hold o' thet much, we can safely send out the call for a reg'lar minister."

"You have done excellent work, Deacon Andrews," declared Phil. "By the way, here is a dollar Luke contributed just before I closed up yesterday afternoon. He wanted me to tell you that he would give another dollar a little later."

"God bless that boy!" cried the deacon as he jotted Luke's name down upon the paper.

"Is there a parsonage here?" questioned Phil presently.

"Huh! Thet calls to mind some more good news, Mr. Tyler," replied the deacon. "I went to see Dan Perkins, the carpenter, 'bout contributin'. Dan's a member o' the church, though o' late years he ain't been very reg'lar 'bout comin'. He's workin' on your new store. Dan told me that he wasn't in no position to give any money jest now, but thet he'd start work on the parsonage, puttin' it in good repair inside on a month, workin' an hour or two each night arter he gets through his reg'lar work, an' Sat'day arternoons."

"That is as good as money," exclaimed Phil.

"Thet's what I told Dan. He broke down an' cried. He said thet he'd been sorter careless the last few years, but thet he was comin' to church reg'lar from now on."

Business was good with Phil that day, and when he closed up he was tired. After supper, however, he felt better and for two hours he played dominoes with Joe. About half past nine he went to his room and read from

his Bible. An hour later he put out his light and for a long time sat beside the open window pondering over what had taken place during the brief time he had lived in the town. While he was seated there the clock down-stairs struck the hour of eleven. It had scarcely ceased striking when there came to his ears the cry of "Fire!" Just then Joe bounded up the stairs and threw wide the door. "There is a big fire up to the centre!" he yelled. "Come on!"

Phil made a grab for his hat and a moment later he was going down the stairs three steps at a time, Joe in the lead. Once outside the house, Phil saw a bright glare in the direction of his store, and a moment later he saw the flames shooting into the air.

"Is your stock insured?" questioned Joe as they ran.

"Yes, I attended to that when I first opened the store," replied Phil.

A run of three minutes brought them in the sight of the burning building, and then it was seen that it was the structure in which the pool-room was located, a two-story building, the upper part of which was vacant.

"Goodby, pool-room!" exclaimed Joe. "Wow! What a furnace!"

Already was the hand-pump manned, water being pumped from a nearby well. The fire was so fierce, however, that the scanty supply of water was being used merely to save adjacent buildings.

Jake Carruthers, who owned the building, stood in the middle of the street, wringing his hands. "I'm ruined! I'm ruined!" he cried. "My insurance don't half cover me!"

"How much are you insured for, Jake?" questioned a bystander.

"Only four thousand! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!"

"Huh! I guess you're more than covered!" growled another. "I wouldn't have given you fifteen hundred dollars for the shack."

Meanwhile the fire was beginning to die down, and it was not a great while before all danger of a conflagration was over. Carruthers bewailed his loss meanwhile.

"You're overdoing it, Jake," laughed one unsympathizing man.

Finally, about one o'clock, Phil and Joe started for home.

Although Phil got only about four hours of sleep that night, he was on hand at the store promptly at half past six in the morning. It was Saturday, and he knew that he had a long, hard day ahead of him, but that fact did not worry him. He was a hustler and he had learned the great truth that the harder one works, the less one minds weariness,—until the time for work is over, and then resting becomes a genuine delight.

Skinny Tucker was on hand at eight o'clock, and when he came he found orders waiting to be delivered.

That morning Miss Brooks came into the store and told Phil that the new hymn-books had come. "Oh, I just know that we are going to have a splendid time at the church tomorrow," she said. "You know what a wonderful voice Mr. Sturgis has?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I know," replied Phil. "His voice carried us all right along last Sabbath."

"Well, he has promised to sing a solo tomorrow—'I Have Sought and I Have Found.' He is going down to the church this afternoon to rehearse it with me. Before he moved here he was a tenor soloist in one of the big city churches."

"The Lord is surely blessing us, Miss Brooks," said Phil.

"When I think that perhaps within a fortnight we will have a settled minister here, I can hardly credit my senses," exclaimed Miss Brooks. Grandfather is off now soliciting for the fund."

"And how about your class—any new members in sight?"

"Yes, I managed to round up four more who have promised to come tomorrow. I am hoping that by a week from tomorrow I can manage to purchase sufficient junior quarterlies to go around."

"Here is a dollar toward it, Miss Brooks," cried Phil, opening the till and taking therefrom a dollar bill.

"Thank you, but—but I did not intend to hint for help."

"I know that, Miss Brooks," laughed Phil. "It is a pleasure for me to give. I only wish that I were in a position to give more freely than I do to the cause of Christ."

Skinny Tucker certainly did make a "reg'lar hoss" of himself that busy Saturday. He was on the go with his push-cart a good share of the day. When he got through, Phil paid him a dollar for the day's work, having already arranged for his work daily after school hours. If ever there was a pleased boy, that boy was Skinny.

Phil was seated beside Joe in church the following morning. He had said nothing to Joe relative to the fact that Mr. Sturgis was to sing a solo. When Mr. Sturgis arose and made his way to the organ, Joe straightened up. It was but a moment before Miss Brooks was playing the few introductory bars to the solo—"I Have Sought and I Have Found."

Spellbound, Joe listened to the full, rich voice of the soloist. He found himself choking up when the final words of the beautiful song were heard, the singer's tones swelling fuller and fuller, filling the church—

"For the longed-for peace and rest,
I have sought and I have found."

After dinner that Sabbath Joe asked Phil if he would like to take a walk in the woods, and Phil gladly assented.

When they reached the cover of the woods Joe called a halt. "Phil," he said, "Phil, I—I want to be a Christian. It was all I could do to keep in while Mr. Sturgis was singing. It broke me all up. I—I want to find that 'peace and rest.'"

Phil removed his hat and dropped upon his knees, and Joe did the same, tears streaming down his face.

It was a rather brief prayer that Phil offered, but into it he poured his soul. For more than an hour Phil talked with Joe, seated upon the carpet of pine needles beneath a big pine tree, explaining to him how Christ died to save sinners. From his pocket Testament he read to Joe, from the eighteenth chapter of Luke, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Suddenly Joe half arose and upon his knees he repeated the publican's prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

Late that afternoon they returned to the house. There was a wonderful look of joy and peace in Joe's eyes when he entered the house. As Phil made his way up the stairs to his room, Joe dropped upon his knees beside his mother. "Mother," he said, "Mother, I have accepted Christ as my Saviour. He has forgiven my sins."

"God be praised!" cried his mother. "At last my prayers have been answered."

CHAPTER XII

MR. PARKER COMES ON FROM BOSTON

A storm had been brewing for some time, and Monday morning rain began to fall. All that day and the following day the rain fell. Wednesday morning, however, broke clear, and Phil was indeed thankful, for that day he expected Mr. Parker to come on from Boston to look over the lake property.

Directly after dinner Phil returned to the store, though he had closed it for the regular weekly half-holiday. He had been back less than half an hour when Mr. Parker arrived in his machine. With him were his wife and son, the latter a young man of about Phil's age. Cordial greetings having been exchanged, Phil stepped into the car, and a moment later they were off for the lake. On the way Phil told of the coming auction.

"Your letter, Phil, came at a particularly opportune time," remarked Mr. Parker.

"Yes?"

"The fact is that I am about to retire from active business," explained Mr. Parker. "My son is to take my place in the store. I would like nothing better than to invest a few thousand dollars in such a piece of property as you

have described in your letter, provided I can see a reasonable profit. Moreover, what especially appealed to me was the thought that such an investment would undoubtedly further the work of the Lord."

As the car rolled into the woods' road which skirted the lake Mr. Parker gave vent to an exclamation of delight. "Wonderful!" he cried. "I never saw a more beautiful sight than this lake and its surroundings!"

Pulling out to the side of the road, the car stopped and a moment later they all alighted. Then they leisurely walked on, pausing from time to time to look at the camps. Finally the circuit of the lake was made and the car reached once more.

"I will bid as high as eight thousand dollars for this property, if I am obliged to," declared Mr. Parker. Then he turned to his wife and said, "Lucy, you would not object to spending the summers here in a bungalow?"

"I would just love to, William," she replied.

"I would plan to be on hand throughout the season to see that no unseemly actions were carried on," said Mr. Parker. "Those tenants who are objectionable would have to vacate, and I would purchase such camps if the price set were reasonable; otherwise, I should compel the owners to remove them. I have many friends down in the city who I think would be very glad to buy or build camps here where they could send their wives and children for a

summer's vacation. I am not worried in the least about filling any vacancies which a rigorous weeding out of objectionable tenants would bring about. During the ensuing two weeks I shall look up the title to the property and learn other necessary facts through my attorney, so that when the auction is held I may be in a position to bid intelligently."

On the way back to the village Phil briefly told of much which had come to pass since he had bought out the store. Reaching the store, he led the way inside. Later he took Mr. Parker over to where the new store was being built. On their return they found it was time for the return trip to Boston.

Jake Carruthers had carried a long face about town since the fire, but Thursday afternoon he was found to be all smiles. The cause of the change was soon learned—the insurance on his building and the contents had been adjusted. Before night it was rumored about the village that he was planning to bid in the lake property. Likewise it was reported that he was intending to run for constable in opposition to Amos Crane! These rumors crystallized into well-authenticated facts. The colossal audacity of the man was fairly staggering to his fellow-townsmen, that is to say, to a large number of them.

The latter part of the afternoon Deacon Andrews entered the store looking decidedly sober. "I presume ye've heared the stories thet's goin' 'round 'bout Jake?" he queried.

"Yes, I have heard that he is planning to bid in the lake property, and that he also figures on running for constable," replied Phil.

"If he gets hold o' the land down to the lake, I guess Amos 'ill have his hands full to keep any sort o' order," remarked the deacon. "Thar ain't no chance o' him bein' 'lected constable, so thet ain't worrin' me a mite. Jake received four thousand dollars today from the insurance company, an' he's got a few thousand dollars salted 'way. If he makes up his mind to own thet land, I'm afeared he'll bid it up to a purty high figger."

"Well, Deacon Andrews, if it is the Lord's will that Mr. Parker should own that property, he will get it," declared Phil. "All that we can do is to pray that success may crown his efforts. Mr. Parker told me that he would go as high as eight thousand dollars, if compelled to, and I would not be surprised were he to go higher, especially when he learns what sort of a man Carruthers is, and you may be very sure that he will soon know. I am going to write to him tonight."

In response to a letter which Phil sent to Mr. Parker the following morning, came a telegram that evening:

"Fear figure I named is my limit."

"William L. Parker."

The following Tuesday the special town meeting was held, and it proved to be a Waterloo for Carruthers. He

polled twenty-seven votes to Amos Crane's two hundred and fourteen!

The following morning Phil's new store was ready for occupancy, and that afternoon the work of moving the goods thither was commenced. Luke was on hand with his horse and wagon, and also Skinny Tucker with his push-cart. Work was rushed with vigor and before sunset the old store was vacant. After supper Joe returned to the new store with Phil, and they worked together until nearly midnight setting things to rights. Already had the oil company dug up the old gasoline tank and re-set it in front of the new store.

Thursday afternoon Dick Kimball, the grocery drummer, arrived. "So you couldn't behave yourself and got your walking-ticket, eh?" he chuckled.

"It looks that way," laughed Phil.

"I heard all about you from Mr. Parker," continued Kimball. "You tried mixing business and religion, and see what happened!"

"I don't see where you have any kick coming, Dick," replied Phil, grinning. "I sent in an order for over three hundred dollars' worth of goods since you were here, and I am planning on giving you another order today which will figure around five hundred dollars."

"All I've got to say, Phil, is this—keep on with the mixing. Now shoot your order at me."

In less than thirty minutes Phil's order had been taken down and the last bill of goods settled for.

"I saw Mr. Parker last Saturday, Phil," declared Kimball as he put up his order-book," and he wanted me to tell you that he will be on hand next Wednesday, by one o'clock; that his lawyer had found everything O. K. about the property, and that he is going to do his level best to secure it. He said, however, that eight thousand is as high as he can go."

For an hour or more Phil chatted with Kimball, telling him a deal of what had happened since the latter's last trip there. Finally, customers coming in, Kimball went along.

The following morning a new sign for the store arrived; Phil ordered it a fortnight or more previous, and when it was put up it made the front of the store look very attractive indeed.

Saturday turned out to be the biggest day yet at the store. Phil was kept on the jump from early morning until late at night. Skinny Tucker did not let any grass grow under his feet, and when the last order was delivered, Phil paid him a dollar and a half, knowing well how hard he had worked. Also, he gave him half a pound of peppermints. Quite needless to state, Skinny's joy was unbounded.

Sabbath morning the expected came to pass—the pulpit was filled by a young clergyman. He was a young man of about thirty years, of most pleasing address. His text was from the eleventh chapter of St. Mark, the twenty-

fourth verse: "Therefore I say unto you, What things so-ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

It was a wonderful sermon, full of hope and cheer, one which renewed the courage of those who were faltering. Phil could not help thinking of the momentous event of the coming Wednesday—the auction, and it renewed his faith that all would yet come out well. A rift appeared in the dark clouds of doubt which had been hovering over him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE AUCTION

Monday morning Luke dropped into the store to make a few purchases. Chancing to go at a time when there were no customers in the store, Phil had quite a lengthy chat with him.

"Thet sermon yesterday was the finest thing I ever heard," declared Luke.

"You liked it, eh?" queried Phil.

"Liked it! I'd be willin' to walk ten mile to hear 'nother like it. I know now thet it means sompin' to pray. When I got hom' I went out in the barn, an' got onto my knees, an' jest asked the Lord to bless thet ha'f-acre o' potatoes I've got planted, them potatoes thet's goin' to buy Bibles for them thet ain't never heard 'bout Jesus. I jest told Him thet I'd do my part to make 'em grow, an' asked Him to make em yield big. Thet was a mighty good idee thet the minister give us—to pray for what we need, but not to forget to do our part toward fetchin' things 'round as we want 'em. Them wasn't jest his words, but thet was the sense on 'em."

"Yes, it was a very good thought, Luke, and I know we can all take it to heart and profit by it," replied Phil.

"By the way, Luke, I am going to tell you something, but for the present I wish you would keep mum about it."

"Ye-ou can risk me, Mr. Tyler."

"I am expecting a friend of mine, my former employer, Mr. Parker, to come on from Boston Wednesday afternoon. He is planning to bid in the lake property. If he gets it, he will weed out all the campers who are objectionable. Mr. Parker is a Christian and plans to turn that property into a camping-ground where women and children can go and not hear or see that which is improper."

"Wall, I jest hope he gets it," replied Luke, "but I dunno; I'm afeared thet Jake Carruthers is goin' to work for it tooth an' nail. The story is goin' 'round town thet Jake said as how he'd bid it in, if he had to pay ten thousand dollars for it."

"Yes, I have heard the same thing," replied Phil. "I have reason to believe that Mr. Parker will not go beyond eight thousand dollars. However, I have prayed, and shall continue to pray that all may come out as we desire. I know this—if it is God's will that the property shall fall into Mr. Parker's hands, he will surely get it."

"Provided we do our part, Mr. Tyler," remarked Luke.

"Well said, Luke."

"Wall, if thar's anythin' I can do, ye can depend on me. H'm. I guess it 'ould be a purty good idee for me to hitch up the hoss Wednesday 'long 'about noon an' drive

down to the depot. I was figgerin' on goin' down to the lake, an auction gener'ly bein' purty interestin', but I guess I'll stop thar at the depot until two or three o'clock. Thar might come a telegram from thet Mr. Parker thet ye'd want purty bad. Case one does come, I'll larrup the hoss an' get to the lake jest as quick as I can."

"Now that is very thoughtful of you, Luke," said Phil. "It is just possible that a telegram might come, as you say, though I am not expecting one."

"Thet 'ill be doin' my part, Mr. Tyler. An' while I'm settin thar, I'll be prayin' thet Mr. Parker 'ill win out with flyin' colors."

Later in the day Deacon Andrews walked in. He was in a decidedly gloomy frame of mind regarding the outcome of the auction. "If Mr. Parker can't see his way clear to go beyond eight thousand dollars, I'm afeared thet Jake 'ill bid it in," he said. "The story is goin' 'bout thet he has raked an' scraped until he has got ten thousand dollars together. I keep thinkin' o' the sermon we heard yesterday, an' I've tried to pray believin', but somehow the doubts 'ill keep creepin' in."

"I am sorry to say that I am inclined to doubt," replied Phil. "I know that I ought not to, but, well, the trouble is that you and I are human, and have not yet learned to trust the Lord as much as we ought."

Monday and Tuesday passed. Wednesday morning was beautiful. Before the noon hour Luke was at the depot

patiently waiting for a possible despatch for Phil. He had spoken to the agent about his errand there, and the latter had promised to hand it to him at once, should one come over the wires.

Phil closed his store promptly at one o'clock. He did not go home to dinner, but contented himself with a lunch of crackers and cheese which he had eaten prior to locking up. He had only turned the key in the lock when Deacon Andrews arrived, and together they started for the lake.

Phil had been hoping that Mr. Parker would show up at the store, and now that the hour set for the auction was fast approaching, he began to worry lest some unforeseen thing had occurred which would delay Mr. Parker. When they reached the edge of the lake, and there was no sign of him, he was tremendously upset, for it lacked but fifteen minutes of two o'clock. Already a big crowd had gathered.

At precisely one-thirty the agent down at the depot ran out and handed Luke a despatch, which, sure enough, had come from Mr. Parker. It read as follows:

"Broken spring. Hired chauffeur and fast car.
Expect to make lake two-thirty. Do your best to
hold up auction."

"William L. Parker."

Luke reached for the whip and the next instant he was off. His horse was far from being a speedy animal, but Luke aroused him to a lumbering gallop, and a judicious use of the whip kept him galloping.

It lacked five minutes of two when Luke reached the scene of the auction. He had little trouble in locating Phil, and having delivered the telegram, he returned to his buggy.

Phil read the despatch and turned it over to Deacon Andrews.

"H'm. I know the auctioneer purty well," remarked the deacon. "I guess I'll show him this telegram. Maybe he'll slow up things a mite."

"Well, Mr. Baxter, it is high time that things got under way here," exclaimed the surrogate from the county-seat just then, speaking to the auctioneer.

"Yes, I suppose we might as well start," replied the auctioneer. Then he glanced at the telegram which Deacon Andrews thrust into his hand.

"Can ye manage to hold it up for ha'f an hour or so, John?" whispered the deacon. "Mr. Parker is plannin' on makin' a clean place here in case he gets hold on't. Ye-ou know the kind of a man Jake Carruthers is, John. He's plannin' on biddin' it in. Slow up things, John, until Mr. Parker gets here, if ye can possibly do it."

"I'll do the best I can, Deacon Andrews," replied the auctioneer in a low voice. Then he sauntered down toward the water.

"Past two o'clock, Mr. Baxter," remarked the surrogate rather impatiently.

"I'll be back shortly," replied Mr. Baxter, continuing on toward the water.

It was fully ten minutes before the auctioneer returned. With him he brought an empty barrel which he had found behind one of the camps. Having placed the barrel bottom side up upon the ground, he started off toward the water once more. Meanwhile the surrogate was fidgeting about. In about five minutes he returned with a box and placed it on the ground beside the barrel.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, having mounted the box, "I suppose the time has come for this auction to start. Before I get under way I want to tell you a story."

"Go on with the auction, Mr. Baxter," growled the surrogate. "Never mind the story."

"When I was a boy I occasionally came up here to go fishing," declared the auctioneer, quite as though there was no such personage in the world as an administrator of estates. "My favorite fish was the horned pout, or bullhead, as the boys call the fish. There were several reasons why I liked the bullhead—it had a mouth which was adapted for the taking of any size of hook, from that of a minnow-hook to a cod-hook; then, too, the bullhead was always hungry. The bullhead's slogan seemed to be—'down with hooks.' Generally it took a jackknife to locate the hook. I—"

"Go on with the auction, Mr. Baxter, or step down and let somebody else take your place!" interrupted the surrogate.

"Is there a licensed auctioneer before me?" queried Mr. Baxter coolly.

When the silence became rather painful he resumed his story.

Meanwhile a high-powered automobile was "eating up" the last ten miles of macadam road which stretched away from South Madison toward Boston. In the car was Mr. Parker, and at the wheel beside him was "Speed Larry," one of the most skillful and daring drivers in the state. Ahead of him was a clear stretch of smooth macadam, every rod of which he knew perfectly. "Speed Larry" was "stepping on the gas." He had in mind a very recent offer made by Mr. Parker—fifty dollars extra, provided the lake was reached by two-thirty. The speedometer registered sixty-five miles per hour! The time was two-twenty!

"I have a very vivid recollection of one particular bullhead which I caught here when I was a youngster of a dozen years or so," continued Mr. Baxter. "It was not a very large bullhead, but it was not long after I performed a more or less skillful operation, having in mind the replevining of my hook, that I came to the conclusion that that particular bullhead was equipped with the longest, sharpest and most murderous horn of any bullhead in the whole lake. I had sat down on him!"

The crowd just roared with merriment.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you will have to be more orderly before I can go on with this auction," remarked Mr. Baxter, looking severely at those before him. There came

to his ears just then the throbbing of a powerful motor—the throbbing of “Speed Larry’s” engine, the muffler off. A big red car shot into sight amid a cloud of dust, and an instant later came to a stop within five rods of where the auctioneer stood.

Phil grinned as he saw Mr. Parker alight.

“God bless ye, Mr. Parker!” exclaimed Deacon Andrews, though he had not as yet been introduced to him. “Ye got here, didn’t ye?”

Mr. Baxter got down to business at precisely two-thirty-two, two minutes after the big red car came to a stop. Having described the property, he asked for a bid.

“Two thousand dollars!” called Jake Carruthers in a loud voice.

“Two thousand dollars I have!” cried the auctioneer. “Who will give me three thousand?”

Mr. Parker raised his hand.

“Three thousand dollars I have! Who will make it four thousand?”

“I will!” shouted Carruthers.

“Four thousand I have! Who will make it five thousand?”

Again Mr. Parker raised his hand.

“Five thousand I have! Who will make it six thousand?”

“Six thousand!” roared Carruthers.

“Six thousand I have! Who will make it seven?”

Once more did Mr. Parker raise his hand.

"Seven thousand I have! Who will make it eight?"

"Ten thousand dollars!" thundered Carruthers.

Mr. Baxter looked inquiringly at Carruthers.

"Ten thousand dollars!" repeated Carruthers, triumphantly.

"Atta boy, Jake!" yelled one of a gang of young fellows who stood close to Carruthers.

"Ten thousand dollars I have!" cried the auctioneer. "Who will make it eleven thousand?"

Mr. Parker made no move. He just stood there looking down at the ground.

"Ten thousand dollars I have once!" declared the auctioneer in a clear voice. "Ten thousand dollars I have twice!"

Poor Phil found himself choking up.

Just then a machine roared up to the spot where "Speed Larry's" car stood, coming to a stop directly behind it. Aboard the machine was Constable Crane and a stranger in a blue suit.

"Ten thousand dollars I have three times!" declared the auctioneer in measured tones. "Third and last call! Are you all done? Going!—"

Constable Crane and the stranger were worming their way through the crowd toward the spot where Carruthers was standing.

"Going!"

Suddenly Constable Crane leaped forward and hooked his sinewy fingers into Carruthers's collar and yanked him backward. "Just a moment, Mr. Baxter!" he shouted. "Before you accept this man's bid, I want to warn you that he is under arrest for arson!"

Carruthers seemed to fairly shrivel. He stood there shaking like one afflicted with palsy.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we will start again at the last acceptable bid—seven thousand dollars," said the auctioneer as Carruthers was being led back toward the constable's car. "Seven thousand dollars I have! Who will make it eight?"

Silence.

"Seven thousand dollars I have once! Seven thousand dollars I have twice! Seven thousand dollars I have three times! Are you all done? Going! Going! Gone! Sold to Mr. Parker for seven thousand dollars!"

It was then that Deacon Andrews did a most scandalous thing for a deacon, especially a deacon eighty-two years of age. He mounted the running-board of an adjacent automobile and swung his hat high in the air. "The hull on ye!" he shouted. "One! Two! Three! Let her go! Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray!"

And what a cheer that was! The ledges across the lake threw the hoarse cheers back. "Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray!

CHAPTER XIV

HARKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Having handed the auctioneer a certified check for three thousand dollars, and remarking that the remaining four thousand dollars would be paid upon the receipt of the final papers, Mr. Parker joined Phil, who was talking with Deacon Andrews and Luke. "The Lord was certainly with us today, Phil," he said fervently.

Phil introduced Mr. Parker to the deacon and to Luke. He remarked that had it not been for Luke, the auction would have been all over long before Mr. Parker got there.

Mr. Parker thereupon attempted to slip a ten-dollar bill into Luke's hand, but Luke drew back. "Not a penny, Mr. Parker!" he said. "I done that for the Lord."

Presently they neared the big red car where "Speed Larry" was seated at the wheel. There Luke bade them all goodby and made his way over to where his buggy was standing.

"Now I guess we are ready to go back," remarked Mr. Parker, speaking to "Speed Larry." "I would like to have these two gentlemen ride back to the village with me." He placed his hand upon "Speed Larry's" arm and said,

smiling, "We have broken enough speed laws for one day. Thirty miles per hour will be sufficient from now on."

At the centre Mr. Parker bade Deacon Andrews and Phil goodby, and saying that he expected to return the following Monday to make settlement in full for the property, and to start the weeding out of objectionable tenants at the lake, he was off once more, bound for the distant town where his car was being repaired.

For a time Phil chatted with the deacon, and then returning to his room, having first told Mrs. Sawyer the wonderful news relative to the lake property, he dropped upon his knees beside his bed and thanked God for the glorious answer to his prayers.

The following day the Reverend Mr. Norris, who had preached at the church the previous Sabbath, in answer to a unanimous call from the members of the church, to occupy the pulpit right along, moved to South Madison with his family. In passing he it stated that although the parsonage was not in complete repair as yet, it was quite habitable, and the work on it was being steadily pushed by Dan Perkins, the carpenter.

The latter part of the following week Mr. Parker found that he owned more than sixty of the camps down at the lake. They cost him from fifty to three hundred dollars each. The entire cost totaled nearly six thousand dollars. In less than a week he re-sold more than half of them at

cost to respectable residents of South Madison. The latter part of that week Mr. Parker and his wife occupied a very comfortable camp which commanded an excellent view of the lake and the surrounding camps.

Jake Carruthers was tried for arson and convicted, certain evidence against him having been unearthed after the insurance company had paid his claim. A long term in the penitentiary followed.

Phil's business prospered. So excellent did it become that twice a week he hired Luke's horse and wagon for deliveries at the lake. Skinny Tucker, though a rather small boy, got along very nicely with the old horse, and proved to be a live order clerk.

Meanwhile Luke's half-acre of potatoes was flourishing. He had worked hard there hoeing and weeding, and as a result he had one of the very best-looking fields of potatoes in the entire township. September came and about the middle of the month Luke dug his half-acre of potatoes—one hundred and sixty-two bushels of them! They were exceptionally smooth and of good size. A dozen barrels was the first shipment to Phil's store, and in less than a week Phil paid him the retail price for them—thirty dollars. "I want ye to send this here money right on to them thet looks arter the sendin' out o' Bibles to folks thet ain't never heared 'bout Jesus, Mr. Tyler," he said. "Jest as fast as the money comes 'long, ye-ou send on. I want

folks to hear 'bout how Jesus died for 'em, an' I don't want 'em to wait any longer'n necessary."

In the meantime both Luke and Joe joined the church. Likewise had Mr. Sturgis accepted Christ as his Saviour and united with the church.

Finally came the close of the season down at the lake. Wonderful strides had been made toward a respectable camping place. All drinking, gambling, and carousing had become things of the past. It had become a place where women and children could spend a day, a week, a month, or a season, without fear of hearing or seeing that which would bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of those who were innocent.

Looking back to the day when first he came to South Madison, Phil called to mind what he had said to himself while walking up to the village—"Something tells me that this is my big opportunity." Now, harking back to that day, it seemed like a prophecy. "God has indeed been good," he murmured. "It has been my big opportunity, and with His help much has been accomplished. There is much more to be done, work for all of us to do, and backed by the wonderful power of the Almighty, we are going to succeed."

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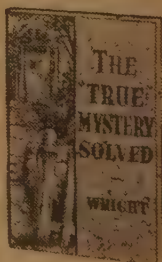
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